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THE

MANSE OF MASTLAND.

THE MANSE OF MASTLAND.

SKETCHES, SERIOUS AND HUMOROUS, FROM THE LIFE OF A VILLAGE PASTOR IN THE NETHERLANDS.

Translated from the Dutch,

By THOMAS KEIGHTLEY,

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PREFACE.

After a literary career of some duration I now appear, for the first time, in the character of a translator.

Passing one day by an old book-shop I saw a book with a Dutch title marked at a very low price. Dutch books are rare in this country, this was a third edition of a late date, the title seemed promising; so I bought it. On reading it I was so much pleased that I thought it deserving of being translated. Not wishing, however, to rely on my own judgement alone, and happening to be then in correspondence with the Bishop of St. David's, on the subject of the Dutch language and literature, I begged of him to read the Work. He did so, and wrote to me as follows:—

"I have finished the Pastorij te Mastland, and am extremely obliged to you for the loan of it. It has to me more than justified your commendation. There is a good deal of quiet humour and pathos, and pleasant glimpses of the *buiten leven* ('rural life') not easily to be gained in the country itself by any but the native. To *me*, however, its chief interest consists in the view which it gives

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The Established Church in Holland, as in Scotland, is Presbyterian. I have therefore used the terminology of the Scottish Church, with which I was furnished by a friend in Scotland. In each parish in both countries there is a deliberative and an executive Body; the former is named in Scotland *Kirk-session*, in Holland *Kerkeraad*, 'Church-council;' the latter in the one *Ruling Elders*, in the other *Kerkbestuur*, 'Church-executive.' It will be seen that I have employed the former terms as well as others which need no explanation. I was first inclined to use *Kirk* instead of *Church*; but it did not appear to be necessary.

With respect to the Affairs of the Poor, as there are no peculiar terms in Scotland, I have managed as well as I could with our English ones, though they do not fully accord with their Dutch congeners. I thus have rendered *Armbestuur* ('Poor-government') by *Guardians*, and *Armmeester* ('Poor-master') by *Relieving-officer*.

We have in general in this country very erroneous notions respecting the Dutch language. We fancy it to be harsh and rugged, while on the contrary it is the softest and sweetest of the Teutonic dialects, without a single inharmonious sound. Like the Lowland Scotch, it loves diminutives, which, by the way, it is not possible to retain in a translation. The Dutch *je* (ye), after vowels *tje*, answers to the Scottish *ie*, as *wijfje*, 'wifie.' As to the pronunciation, I may observe that double vowels, as *aa*, *oo*, denote the long sound of the vowel (*ee*

sounds as *ai* in *fair*); that *j* answers to our *y* (which in two instances, Baljon and Keetje, I have ventured to substitute for it), and *w* to *v*; that *ei* and *ij* are sounded as *y* in *try, fly*; that *oe* is our *oo*; and *eu* as in French. It is not easy to express the sound of *ui*, so the reader had best pronounce the letters separately.

Akin to diminutives are the familiar forms of proper names. A favourite man's name in Holland is Adrianus, and for it, in the following pages, the reader will meet Janus, Ariaan, Arij, Aai; for Maria there are also several of these forms, for which I, in general, use our Molly and Polly, in some cases give the original.

As for Dutch money, five stivers (*stuivers*) are equivalent to sixpence, and twenty make the *gulden* or florin.

Habent sua fata libelli. This Work seems to have escaped the knowledge of the Germans, and had I not on a certain day passed through a certain street, its fame might have been confined to its native country. I am convinced that it will be acknowledged that the time spent in translating it has not been misspent.

T. K.

Mortlake, Oct. 1, 1860.

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THE

MANSE OF MASTLAND.

I.

THE AUTHOR IN HIS STUDY.

O MY own room! unto what shall I compare thee? Thou art like unto the little, but warm and social nest that the sparrow makes for herself under the tiles; like unto the neat abode that the swallow constructs in my barn. For this reason, as I can get on well enough with them, I never drive away these pretty, peaceful little creatures, while I banish out of the house, with all the speed I can, the noisy, thievish jackdaw, that has actually collected a whole magazine of stolen goods in my chimney.

O my own room! how fond have I grown of thee in the course of four years! It is, in truth, so pleasant to dwell under one's own roof, to sit by one's own fireside, to have one little spot on the wide earth that one can call wholly and solely one's own. It is true the Manse is not one's own house, and the occupier cannot say, like many a great man of his estate, "I am monarch of all I survey." But still it unites the advantages of a house

of one's own and of one that is rented. As long as it suits us to live in it no one can put us out, it is kept in repair for us, and we are not pestered at Christmas with tradesmen's bills, little of which is legible but the sum-total, which is usually by no means agreeable.

And then my own room, how simple it is, and how cozy and comfortable! So wholly my own territory! The maid-servant, when she comes up the stairs with brush and dust-pan, or with mop and bucket, stops respectfully at the door, and waits till I say "Come in, but make haste;" and then she makes all the haste she can, and gets through her work quicker there than anywhere else, feeling conscious, as it were, that this is not *her* place. Even my dear Cornelia herself taps at the door before she comes in, and she taps too quite gently, lest she should drive a happy thought out of my head, and thus make a breach in my good-humour.

It is round, no upholsterer has desecrated the white of the walls. They are covered with bookcases instead of coloured paper, and here and there are nails in them, on which I can hang a coat or a great-coat, a map or a file of papers, a pipe or a professor. Then the bookcases—they are rather scarce of handsome volumes, but right well supplied with books of solid worth. These are the old acquaintances of my college days, to which a few casual new inmates have been added. It is not at all necessary that they should have their names on their backs, like those in great libraries, where the names stand beside each other like so many monumental inscriptions: *Here hath rested for some years N. N., laid here after the death of his early friends.* No, no, my

books live for me, and have their own places, which I can find in the dark; and they shall keep them as long as I keep mine. We have often conversed with each other, and they are still my oracles; for their memory is better than mine.

The table at which my comfortable armchair is placed is a valuable piece of furniture. At a sale, to be sure, it would fetch but little, but here it is worth a great deal. It is made of good stout oak, and never wabbles or shakes; it is neither too high nor too low; there's hardly room on it for any new blotches of ink. How can anything be better than good?

When I think over the destiny of this room, how many holy and interesting, and also how many mournful, recollections are associated with it! I have studied the large board in the church on which are the names of my predecessors,—mine is not there yet, for the painter is waiting till I am removed or dead, and then he will go leisurely to work and set mine there also. I have, moreover, like a learned commentator, consulted the accounts and recollections of the hoary-headed fathers of the village, and now I set before me how here, unknown on the great theatre of the world, many generations have followed each other. Here, soon after the building of the manse, the learned but timid Adisius wrote his cautiously-worded sermons, out of which notwithstanding, wise Elders, aided by a zealot of the neighbouring clergy, knew how to extract the errors of Arminianism; here he lay awake for nights meditating on his defensive petition, till at last he faded away, worn out with toil and mental suffering, lamented only by

the simple and the poor. Here his successor, an impetuous Contra-Remonstrant,* wrote learned expositions of Scripture, which none of his auditors fully comprehended, but which nevertheless edified them, as they were praised by those they looked up to. Here half a century later sat Father Bolhemius, and trembled with indignation while he defended the Sabbath against the Coccceians,† and thought on sharp words for his vigorous Application. But here also the pious and gentle Riporius composed his truly Christian discourses, of which the old people still speak with affection whenever they go over again the recollections of their mothers, and recall the days when they were yet children. In later times this table presented quite a different appearance. Instead of the ponderous folios and quartos which put to the proof the strength of the good oak, there lay on it a promiscuous heap of journals, little blue books, and modern philosophy, and the lively Noltens, who would fain, along with the Latin termination of his name, lay aside all what he deemed to be old prejudices, exerted all his ingenuity to find a text of Scripture to place at the head of his lecture on the rights of man. And now, after the various vicissitudes that this room has gone through, here sit *I*, till my name also shall come on the board, and all my thinking and writing and speaking, my pastoral cares and my youthful errors shall be included in the blanks between the words:

"Appointed . . . May, 1838; removed or died . . ."

Meanwhile I feel as if what was in former days thought

* The Remonstrants are the Arminians.

† The followers of Cocceius, a mystic interpreter of Scripture.

or uttered in this room was still about me, and sounded in my ears like the tones of an Æolian harp, now affecting and melancholy, then warning and threatening, then again cheering and consoling; and my own memory is never more awake than here, where ere now so many ideas, mournful and joyous, wise and foolish, have passed through my mind, and thousands of pages and millions of letters have flowed from my pen. And amidst all the human weaknesses that degrade the recollections of former years, as well as my own, the spirit of the Gospel hovers, as the guardian-angel of mankind, over this simple room, whence the proclamation of it has gone forth for years and ages.

It is Monday morning. Of a truth this may be a day of rest and a holiday for us, with far more reason, than for the lazy, boozing journeyman-shoemaker. Sunday, the day of rest for others, however holy and precious it is for us also, is to us a real working-day. On Sunday evening I at last sit down quietly with my wife and children; at night I sleep without care or uneasiness, and in the morning I get up, just at what hour I please, with the delightful feeling that I am not called upon to make any exertion whatever.

I have therefore laid it down as an established law to keep myself wholly to myself, and free from all regular business, on Monday morning. I then dress myself in a loose and easy way, and, when I can avoid it, never go out; I am everywhere and nowhere; form a great many plans, give my orders right and left—and do nothing. It is so with me today. I got through my work yester-

day greatly to my satisfaction. I am uncommonly lively and cheerful. In the full consciousness of my comfort I lay an extra half-hour peeping through the bed-curtains, and amused myself with the industry of my wife, whose day of rest was already over, while mine was but just beginning. So I fell again into a slumber, in that pleasant state of dreaminess in which we enjoy the repose of the sleeping, and yet have not altogether lost the consciousness of the waking man, when I heard the well-known voice saying, "Come, William, it's now high time. Breakfast has been waiting for you ever so long!"

After breakfast I went to take a view of my hotbeds; that is to say, of a couple of old frames, which, after three years' ample deliberation, had been taken by the Ruling Elders out of the front gable of the manse, and then, after three monthly meetings, had been cobbled up with old planks into the form of hotbed frames. I raised up one frame, and I was much gratified at the prospect of eating our first salad in about a fortnight; then the other also; but oh! the mole has not been caught yet. He had gone through the whole place once more, and in one night raised with his back and turned over the harvest of a month, and the only spot he had not visited was where the trap was. I then returned to the house, to communicate the doleful intelligence to my wife; and after mature consultation on what was to be done in this business, I went upstairs to the garret to make an inspection of my apples; it looks as if they were ashamed of having lasted so long, now that the sun of spring was shining so pleasantly, so they were making all the haste they could to decay. Then I went down into the cellar,

to make them tap a kilderkin of beer, and so rambled through all the rooms in my house, except the best room, which is my Cornelia's own *sanctum;* and now I am sitting here and mending pens, and putting books out of the way, and beginning a letter, which I do not finish, and from time to time taking a look at the boughs of the fruit-trees, from which the melted snow is trickling, like tears shed by winter at taking leave.

Then I hear a cautious knocking at my room-door; but as it is Monday morning, it is opened at once, without waiting for an answer. It is my Keetye,* with the dear little Mina in her arms. I had just that moment opened a locked drawer in the table, and taken out a bundle of papers of different sizes and dates, on which I was beginning to pore with a cast of countenance partly serious, partly dubious and contemptuous.

"What! are you busy, William, and that on Monday morning?"

"I do not perceive that I am, Keetye."

"Well, you have papers before you, pens mended, and such a deep-thinking politic countenance, as if you had to draw up a state-paper; for you do not look serious enough for a sermon, nor cross enough for a letter. But stop, I may go away, for the secret drawer is open."

"And just as I was on the point of letting you see something out of the secret drawer! It has always been a thorn in your eye."

"Then I must sit down awhile, but not long, for this is Monday morning. But do you know what? The

* Kee and Keetye are the diminutives of Cornelia; Bram of Abraham, Mina; I presume, of Wilhelmina.

mole and the secret drawer have made you so forgetful that you have not given Mina a single kiss yet; and the child is stretching her little arms out to you so affectionately!"

My wife was in the right. The awakening of a new emotion in my simple and uniform course of life had made me somewhat abstracted. "How then must it be," thought I, "with the children of great scholars and of ambitious statesmen!" and, not without some shame I took my little Mina on my knee and looked quietly on while she laughed and tossed my papers about with her little hands. It may be the public will not act toward them with more sense or with more reverence.

"Now, William, there you sit musing like a philosopher, and I am wasting my precious time expecting to hear your important secrets."

"Well, then, I'll tell you at once. I am going to publish a book."

"Aha! I now excuse you for being so glum. Authors and chess-players are dull company. And what is it to be? Sermons of course."

"And what would the public care for sermons of mine? Sermons, Keetyeh, are only bought for the name, or the occasion, or for the way of thinking. Many buy them for the sake of the *name*, who never read a line of them; philanthropists and curious people will buy them on account of the *occasion*, and just look through them; and for the *mode of thinking*, the ultra-orthodox and all other ultras, who expect to find there an echo of their own ideas. Now I have no name a mile out of Mastland; fortunately my church or my

manse has not yet been burnt down, and I am not a standard-bearer in our established church. The better my sermons appear in their proper place before the congregation of Mastland, the worse figure would they make in the shop of a publisher,—in the shop I say, for most surely as soon as he saw the title of the manuscript he would never admit it into his counting-house. Should I take it to town myself, it would cost the good man no little annoyance to get rid of me as quickly as possible without hurting my feelings too much."

"Why, you talk like a book! But tell me now, what else have you but sermons?—But wait a moment, William, I hear Bram crying belowstairs."

"Well, then, to make short work of it, I will just read you my plan, as I have drawn it up for Altorf, that he might show it to a bookseller of his acquaintance."

"The profession to which I count it an honour to belong, is undoubtedly one of the most important in society. The village pastor, however little known away from home in general, can, by his quiet, undisturbed, continuous exertion, exercise a great and a lasting influence over a large portion of the population, and precisely over that part of it which is the firmest support of our real prosperity, nationality and morals. Meanwhile our profession and its sphere are very little known to the busy and the reading world. The countryman who is our witness, has no voice with the public; he is not rightly known; he seldom speaks in town society, and he never writes for the press. Should not then a simple representation, but one drawn from the life, of the village

manse and its inhabitants, prove agreeable reading for many persons, merely from its novelty? Should not the reader, by means of it, be able to extend his knowledge of human nature, and learn to recognize the power of a religion which exercises its influence for the most part in stillness and quiet? Should not many a father be thus brought to know better what it was he was intending his son for, and what was requisite for it? and many a youth what the profession was that he had selected?

"As far as I have had intercourse with the people of towns, I have seldom heard our profession estimated at its real value. And this is not unnatural. Honour, money and comfort are on the stage of the world the objects on which the restless, industrious actor has his eye fixed. Honour comes the first to view in the judgement passed upon us. A young preacher is extolled as a young man who has ambition, who wishes to get on in the world and devotes all his labour to this object. This, people think, must be his sole object; and if he does not succeed, he is then bemoaned as *a poor bungler that could not get on,* or as *a clever fellow, who it is a pity that he gets no promotion.* But if this were the main object of our profession, how hazardous were it to venture in a lottery in which there are so many blanks! For the most of us remain for ever in country-livings, and there wear away their days, and there their light shines, be it feeble or bright, without being seen at any distance.

"The public then, when we have been for some years in a village, and our thoughts of promotion have fallen into the background, looks on us with a certain degree of

compassion. They weigh our position in gold-scales, and in them it proves of little value. 'It is no doubt a certain income,' says the trader, 'but it's a scanty one indeed.' And whenever the minister comes from his remote residence into the town, then his coat is rather threadbare, his hat out of the fashion, and his children gape and stare all about them, as if they had never known that the world was so large. Some look on with pity, but others make a jest of him, and deem him nothing better than a peasant in a black coat.

"But when we have spent some years in the same place, our condition, under another point of view does not seem to be so deplorable. While in the town every one is toiling and slaving, the elderly preacher may enjoy repose. He has sermons enough, and why need he weary himself any longer? His views of promotion have been long at an end; he is become a busy *rentier*. It is not then a profitable position, but it is an easy one.

"That there is some truth in this view of the matter —more than I could wish—is what I will not deny. But it annoys me that people regard our profession on the most worthless, least creditable side; that they do not discern the Christian labours of many, and do not recognize the benefits of their teaching. For this very reason, then, I will enable the impartial reader to become acquainted with the circle in which we move; not with an ideal of it, which it were easy to compose, but with the plain simple representation of our mode of life, exactly as it is in reality.

"It is self-evident that in doing so I must not draw *my* circle exactly after the life. In that case I should

be obliged to offer violence to the truth, in order not to expose any one. I am also by no means desirous that my heart and my house and my congregation should form the amusement of the curious. But under feigned names and events I will produce the self-same truth, the self-same wisdom and folly, in which I have now passed four years, and hope, if it be the will of God, to spend the rest of my life. I must not venture then even to give my own name, lest people should connect other names with it, and mayhap look for a satire where I only intended to give an instructive representation. I even deem it to be better that the reader should not know me. In this way the bloom of the fiction remains uninjured, and the judging of the truth does not depend —as is too frequently the case in days of party-heat — on the judgement upon myself personally.

"With respect to the form of the work, that depends altogether on myself; for in committing my notes to paper, I have merely followed the whim of the moment. Coming forward as an author, I hold it my duty to adapt myself to the taste of the public; for I cannot expect it to adapt itself to mine, and a work should not only be good but it should be read. Should the title be *Letters of a Village Pastor,* I fear it would only serve as a warning to people not to read any further; published letters belong to the eighteenth century. If it should be *Essays,* our times have been so surfeited with them that people are desirous to substitute a lighter and more exciting kind of food. It appears to me that *Sketches from the Manse* would fall in completely with the public taste; light sketches just suit the minds of most readers,

who do not like any great effort, and are quite content with reading the half, provided they are not required to remember any part of it."

"There now, Cornelia, I had written just so far. What do you think of it?"

"That your friend Altorf has beguiled you, and induced you to go, where you have always said you never would go—out of your own society."

"Yes, but I make the excursion *incognito*."

"We shall see if you *can* do it."

"Eh, what! do you think I am not able to do it?"

"I should like at least to see it. In the first place, a preacher or a schoolmaster could not even in a masquerade disguise himself perfectly; people recognize them by their very step, because they usually have it somewhat peculiar. And then, William, it is so natural to you, when you are writing, to write what is true, that you would be continually letting the fiction escape you, which is not quite at home in this room."

"That we shall see, however. I—"

"Well now, very good. But, William, highly as I esteem the object you have in view, could you not combine another object with it? We have three children, and—"

"Hush, Keetye! be still as death. It is fortunate that we are quite alone. These are things that must never be spoken of but under the rose, and then just sa if it were quite a matter of indifference. Be very cautious, dear, when any one is by."

"Don't be angry with me, William; I did not know

that. Come, Mina, we'll go away now. I see, my love, you are getting impatient. But I must make one condition, William,—*I* am not to be in your book."

"I promise you, although you must be in it, that you will not know yourself."

"Then I am satisfied. Write, in God's name. But do you hear?—when the reviewers cut you up, don't vent your temper on me. And once more, whatever you publish—no portrait of *me*."

And while my dear spouse was going out of the room with the child on her arm, I gazed after her with pleasure; for the woman who will only be known through her husband, and children and friends, is great in her obscurity.

And now, Reader, take my sketches such as they are. I am no novelist, nor poet, nor painter,—simply a preacher, nothing more. Do not look for any local or personal peculiarities in my little book. You will only find myself in it, just as I am, my ideas,—my observations; and if I have concealed myself too unskilfully, whoever recognizes me will, I hope, be a friend. In that case I will give him the right hand with all my heart, but at the same time lay my left hand on his mouth.

II.

INDUCTION.

WITH pleasure do I continually recall that holy, that glorious day, the birthday of my precious office. It brings to my mind so much that is agreeable, so much also that is instructive. Alas! why has death hung the dark mourning-crape over the image of the paternal friend, who was the first to lay the hand of a brother upon me, and who so heartily invoked the blessing of God on me, and then in the kindest manner went over my manse. But all the recollections which come on me in these moments are of a serious nature, and may well be hallowed with a pious tear.

Half-a-dozen probationers had already exhibited their gifts in the pulpit of Mastland; but it happened that the Kirk-session, which after the forty-year service of my predecessor, had for the first time to give a call, was not very easy to please. This vacancy had long been expected; every member, not alone of the Kirk-session and the corporation, but also every person of any note in the place, had formed his or her own idea of a perfect Dominie. Not one of my brethren had as yet come up to it. The first stood too stiff, and did not use his hands enough; the second was not easy enough to understand; the third was far too brief in his application; the fourth did very well, but on coming down

from the pulpit, and making a few bows, he left the village with all speed; against the fifth the voice of all the women of Mastland was raised because he had a hump, and against the sixth because he had red hair. I was number seven, and number eight was a clever contemporary of mine; and no doubt it would not have been thus limited, were it not that the lord of the manor, with whom the appointment lay, had committed it to the Kirk-session, on condition that they should confine their choice to the eight which he had nominated.

The decisive day arrived. I preached in the forenoon, and saw that all went well; but when in the afternoon I heard the powerful and affecting language of my rival, I never doubted for an instant but that my journey had been to no purpose. But to my astonishment I very soon saw that all was not quite sure yet. The old surgeon, and the well-fed Burgomaster—they had had a good dinner at noon—had not been able to overcome an inveterate habit, and were gone to sleep; the oldest of the Elders was not quite sure of the orthodoxy of the sermon; the schoolmaster thought the preacher's walk and carriage not serious enough. Still the matter was not decided; at last, however, the *votum* of one of the deacons determined it. "Listen to me, gentlemen; when I was going round with the poor-bag, I looked up now and then; but mind me, it was not to be borne to see those spectacles of his! It is true he kept them off in general, but mark what I say, it will be another guess matter if once he gets the place. And it is not wise of us to take a man that is half blind, when we can get plenty of those who can see well."—In short,

the congregation was of the same way of thinking, and would not be looked on by eyes armed with spectacles, and so I was chosen.

What glad tidings I brought home with me for my own relations and those of my dear girl! Every one must know them; and, though it was February, what with paying visits, what with writing letters, I was in a continual perspiration. Every one wished me joy and called me a lucky fellow. With both our families I had to form plans respecting furniture and curtains, to bespeak boats and waggons, to determine festival-days; and I had often half-a-dozen questions to answer at the same time. A good deal, however, was done with nods, especially with the women; for what did I, little more than a mere student, know about housekeeping?

Meanwhile my friends wished to make themselves better acquainted with my future residence. That, to be sure, was quite natural. They were going to lose me in a place, the very name of which was unknown to the most of them, and they surely ought to know where to find me. Accordingly maps were examined, and old descriptions were read, countrypeople were listened to on the subject; above all, my Uncle John, whose favourite I was, interrogated every countryman that entered his shop. What comforts, advantages, and conveniences were not discovered in the region which was unknown to the querist! One found that it was convenient, another that it was fertile and healthy, a third that it was pleasant and rural; all deemed it the very spot for a probationer, neither too large nor too small. And when Uncle John, with the rest of the family and friends,

had gone over the manse on the first fine day in April, the enthusiasm was at its height. How kind and simple the people were! how neat the manse, and how extensive the garden! what splendid roads, and what fertile fields! above all, what a fine view from the top of the house, suitable to a rural residence!—My kind, good relations! They are now beginning to think less of this dear Mastland, and to wish me something better. The place is rather out of the way, the house is damp, and the roads are heavy, especially in the winter, and the conversation of the people is not of a high tone; and then such a boorish congregation!—The castle in the air has now stood for four summers and four winters exposed to the weather, and it has often been scorched by the sun, shaken by the storm, and split with the frost. The plaster is come off in some places, and the naked walls expose their weak spots and their damp weather-stains. Still, in my eyes, it is a comfortable dwelling. I was somewhat less enthusiastic than my friends, and so I have been less disappointed; and, beside this, I have a tie to this place and to this house that a stranger does not know; I have tasted of joy and of sorrow in this dwelling and with this congregation.

But I must now say something about my coming into the parish.

Our wedding then was duly celebrated; for Uncle John, as an old Dutchman, was peculiarly qualified for such a ceremonial. He pronounced decidedly against the usual nuptial trip, which he termed a rude, unmannerly mode of running away with the bride. After that we were to set out for our own house. Trunks, bonnet-boxes,

chests—I tremble this very moment at the thoughts of it! Then came the entrance ceremonial. The old villagers remembered how such a thing was done forty years ago, and the present generation would not fall short of their forefathers. Accordingly the Manse was put into neat order and adorned with green boughs, while an old flag, with the Prussian eagle on it, waved from the garret-window; how this last came into the hands of an Assessor of Mastland I have never been able to comprehend; but, however it be, there it was, and it was a flag. The street, moreover, was strewn with branches of palm and flowers, which were guarded for many a long hour by the beadle, and not without difficulty. A dozen young girls were waiting for us at the gate, that is to say at the railing of the manse, and Balyon the schoolmaster wiped the perspiration from his brow, and every quarter of an hour read his verses over again, in which from time to time he amended a word or so with a black-lead pencil. But all these preparations did not content the young peasants. They had already formed a guard of honour, nominated a commander, and purchased powder and shot; but my wife had entreated not to be exposed to such terrors. This gave occasion to various letters, and nearly cost us the favour of the rising generation. Fortunately the Burgomaster put an end to the discontent, by giving permission to shoot before and after, though not at, my arrival.

At last—it was Thursday, and a glorious day in the month of May—we came to Mastland, and that of course in Mastland carriages. These were pretty little vehicles,

in which we rode along very comfortably, for the holes of the winter had been filled up by the dust of summer, and the road was as level as a bowling-green. But the faces of the ladies expressed pain and terror when the gallant horses went at full speed over the street of the village. We were received with a general huzza. In the manse were ready for us coffee, bread and so forth, while the good schoolmistress sighed and shook her head, because the spout of the best coffee-pot would not keep free. Master Balyon kept continually bowing and humming; the rest of the authorities drew near—and all that for *me!* In short this was one of those days on which our life resembles a stately theatre. The dazzling light of the lamps makes the scenes glitter; splendid houses and beautiful gardens arise, as if by the stroke of a magician's wand; gallant heroes and lovely women tread the stage, and give expression to the noblest sentiments and the purest feelings; and the novice does not perceive that the scenes are merely pasted paper and the actors painted men and women. But with all this, there was a fair reality concealed under this tinsel; the people were delighted that they had once more got a pastor of their own, and were disposed to look on him as a sincere friend.

The two following days were hardly days at all; they were fleeting hours, that quickly and without any order followed each other, and in which no one minded whether it was noon or evening,—by so much the more as Sunday was coming so soon.

Sunday came. My wife was just as much perplexed about the ham and the ribs of beef, as I was about my

induction discourse. A curious hint how man is composed of flesh and spirit!

How solemn did the ringing of the church-bell sound in my ears! With what interest, and at the same time with what anxiety, did I regard the multitude pouring from all sides toward the church—only for *me!* Wherever I turned my eyes, whether to the church or through the crowd, how did the thousands of looks strike me—only on *me!* I did not come to myself until I had sunk down on the soft cushions, behind the high breastwork of the Kirk-session seat. Here at least I could think and feel, though not connectedly, and here a silent prayer could ascend to Him that is invisible from my anxious and perturbed heart.

My paternal friend arose . . . Alas! he will never more read this recollection. But so be it! he is at rest from his labours.

With simple earnestness and without much external eloquence—was he anything more than a mere country clergyman?—but with cordial interest, he dwelt on the high value of the preaching of the Gospel, on the solemn ties between the minister and the congregation. I cannot tell whether the plan of the discourse was skilful and the subject well worked-out or not,—I never thought on the matter; but I know that the congregation listened, and I was deeply affected. There prevailed in the little brim-full church a reverent silence; no one observed it in any particular case, but all together.

After the delivery of the brief discourse followed the ordination. Awful, never-to-be-forgotten moment! in which the whole extent and all the blessedness of my

new relation rose up before my mind and pressed on my heart, though with a bewildering confusion. Important YES with which I devoted the bloom of life and all my powers to the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. That YES was to me a sudden transition from youth to manhood; from the free and careless student, who lived wholly for himself and his studies, to a guide of the ignorant, a friend of the sinner and the afflicted, who has to deal out the carelessly gathered treasure seriously and with discerning judgement; the transition finally from the state of a young citizen, who is only responsible for himself, and of whom society asks no more than not to disturb it, to that of the keeper of a flock belonging to the supreme Shepherd, who will have to render to the Lord an account of the condition of his dearly purchased people. And now, after that solemn admonition, the paternal blessing with which my friend and counsellor quitted the pulpit; and then the never-to-be-forgotten moment when the older Brethren laid their hand on the head of the novice; the cordial Confirmer bedewed his with tears, and the congregation sang:

"The Lord's own Spirit give the teacher strength!"

Yes, beyond question, there are moments in this life,—ah, why are they so brief?—moments when we feel that Jacob's ladder still is reared, and the angels of God are ascending and descending between heaven and earth.

And what have you to say about an ordination, you that have never seen one, except that for a second parish, especially in a great town? I do not wish to force my opinion on any one, but I have never been able to conceive the necessity of a public repetition of ordination

in the case of another parish. Is the first consecration lost? the promises for life forgotten? Does not the minister bring with him the testimony of a parish? and is he likely to keep his second YES if he was not faithful to his first? Would it not be quite sufficient if it only took place when the new minister was binding himself to his congregation and his Colleagues on first entering on his office? It has appeared to me sometimes as if on such occasions all those who were present showed by their invincible coldness that they looked on the whole as a useless ceremony; they listened with such indifference to the polite greetings and the long addresses of the Colleagues, and many seemed to have come for no other purpose than to hear whether the new minister was able or not to cry, shout, trumpet forth through the large church-dome with a strong voice, "*Yes, I do, with my whole heart!*" It may be, reader, that you think I am going too far. I agree with you, certainly, that every sacred solemnity has in it something impressive, provided it be well performed and reverently attended to; but yet, if you would see a real ordination, go to some out-of-the-way village that is with a hearty interest receiving a well-intentioned young man, who on his side is consecrating to it his first strength, with tears and prayers—*that is a virgin marriage!*

Such was the ordination; of the induction I shall say little. Whenever I think now of the speech, begun in one place, finished in another, in a whirlpool of various feelings, I find in the composition many failures, and I almost feel ashamed of having delivered it in the presence of so many competent judges. Were I to per-

form another induction, it would perhaps be better done; it would—do not people always say so?—give more satisfaction. And, nevertheless, I greatly doubt if it would be better, than it was then, between God and my heart; or if I should taste a more blessed satisfaction with myself, a purer foretaste of heavenly bliss. Do you not always, ye who hear us, estimate the inner man of the heart by the words which you hear from the pulpit, according to the momentary impression they make on you? Faith, zeal, and piety do not always find flowing, powerful, impetuous words to express themselves in; the sensibility of a warm heart often confuses the mind, and the feelings take away the freedom and the power of speech; at a later period practice and skill master the feelings, and then perhaps, God knows, our words are better than our hearts, just as formerly the heart was better than the words.

But we will leave the church now, and visit the manse, where all through the day, but especially after the two church-services, there has prevailed an unusual degree of hurry and confusion. It is in reality no trifling change when we go thither with the reverend and the non-reverend crowds. Brother clergymen, with a whole train of women, children, and mounted Elders; the good, obliging schoolmistress; a few gay college friends, the family, relations, mere acquaintances,—all pour in and out, so that it is not worth while to shut the door or to latch the outer gate. This various crowd and bustle, after the tranquil solemnity, was something like a joyous meal after an old-fashioned funeral, like a wedding on Sunday evening, or a fair at Easter or Whitsuntide.

To *my* feeling it was at that time annoying and disagreeable; not that a single word grated on my nerves —all was kept within the bounds of proper relaxation and lawful pleasantry—no, not a single word or a single person; but the rushing hither and thither, and the noise was too much for me, and that in my own house. But how often is the world around us at variance with our frame of mind! I was however quite satisfied to find that my own room, especially at noontide, was regarded as an inviolable sanctuary.

In this respect my wife was less fortunate. In the morning, before church-time, all went right, and she got at least time to dress herself, and to put some things in order. Some vehicles merely discharged their lading at our house, and that as large a one as the seats would permit. But after the morning-service it was literally a storm in and out, before and after her. Drest as she was she had to undergo a dozen sets of compliments before she could take off her bonnet and shawl. Meanwhile the gentlemen and ladies repaired to the rooms appointed for them. That of the gentlemen was under mine. At first I heard a confused noise of men and chairs—each was taking his place; then nothing but a gentle rumbling and knocking—they were emptying the plates of tobacco and lighting their pipes; and then arose, like the murmur of the waves, the sound of a multitude of voices, which fortunately were melted into one buzzing mass before they reached my room. I was glad to perceive that there were a good many clergymen present, for from a certain habit they acquire, at least one-half of them spoke alike.

After the company had gradually increased, I heard, about an hour later, a general onslaught on the ham and ribs of beef,—a peaceful kind of warfare, in which every one was an assailant and no one came off wounded, and which also procured me some tranquillity under my feet. And in truth, the zeal with which they went to work proved that the heart was not so much affected as to prevent the stomach from asserting its rights.

Finally, however, when the afternoon-service was over, I could no longer remain in retirement. I then beheld a crowd of strange faces, I heard fragments of various conversations, I suffered myself to be led about and viewed and congratulated, and I was at that moment the person who was least at home in my own house. How could I then make acquaintance, or converse about trifles! Luckily the minds of the guests gradually calmed down; they separated into different parties in the garden, and the elderly gentlemen, as they turned up their cups, drew their watches out of their pockets, and looked out for the peasants who had conveyed them thither, or gave orders to their own people; and whenever any one of the neighbouring clergy, too much devoted to his tea or his pipe, had neglected this matter, you might see through the cloud of smoke and the open door, a thin forefinger, and hear a gentle voice say, "Dominie, would it not be time to be going?"

The power which the mere idea of departing exercises over a man is remarkable. The most animated conversation is broken off, the quietest man becomes fidgety, the slowest is in a hurry. For my own part, I always find something melancholy in going away, even when I may

have been wishing for it. The Colleagues were the first to go, with a desire for further acquaintance, and their fellow-travellers, who stood ranged behind them, with unintelligible expressions and profound bows. Friends of both sexes out of our former circle were all obliged to promise to come again soon and often,—more than one, by the way, has forgotten to do so; time and motion, we see, cleave bands of iron,—why not then the soft band of friendship? Uncle John, the good, hearty man, for whom this day had been in reality a festival-day, squeezed my hand with these expressive words, "Now, William, mind yourself, lad, and God be with you!"

So at last my wife had an opportunity, with the aid of the Mistress, of clearing away the confused remains of the first piece, fragments of pipes, picked bones, plates of bread, and piles of tobacco-ashes, and what else is to be met with on such an occasion. This clearing of the stage was effected with the greatest possible speed, and with the aid of some active friends and servants, in order that everything, person and head-gear, chairs and tables, might be ready for the afterpiece.

The afterpiece, succeeding such an important and tumultuous play, how shall I term it? It is a ballet after the noise of the opera, an audience after a splendid procession, a composing draught in a violent fever.

The reader must know then that all the authorities of the village are invited *suo jure* to the new minister's on the evening of the day of ordination, with the right of bringing their better halves with them, in order that *his* spouse may not want for company. Previously, by sundry messages across the street and nods from over the

hatch, the time was arranged for the general attack, in which the schoolmaster played an important part. Then approached the Burgomaster with his peacock-step—*he* looked straight before him; the assessors and common-councilmen, all gravity—*they* looked about them; the members of the Kirk-session—*they* looked on the minister with an air of proud satisfaction as partakers in the accomplished work; the Ruling Elders—these do not look before them, but up, at the newly coloured ceiling, or down on the new floor; lastly the schoolmaster, who would regard himself from every point if human eye could reach so far.

The circle was formed. I have never yet seen social freedom where chairs were set in a mathematical circle, no more at a professor's on tea-day than in my manse. It was quite plain that the pipes of some of the guests were too long for them; you might see by some members of the Kirk-session that the minister was a stranger to them, and by me that I was quite confused and exhausted. By the way I will give a piece of advice to yourself or to such of your relations as are likely to be in this situation, and that is to have a good supply of food both solid and liquid, for the less that comes out of the mouth the more goes into it. When it struck ten o'clock, the Burgomaster with an expressive look knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

Now for the first time my Cornelia and myself stood there opposite each other, alone in our manse, as minister and minister's wife of Mastland! I can hardly express it now how I felt then. It seemed to me that I had occupation for several weeks, for several months in

store; an intoxication of feelings, in which the soul knew not which way to turn. I felt as if a whole cargo of all sorts of things, light and heavy, had been shot into the house, so that I had barely time to get them in, out of the rain, and could only by degrees look through them and arrange them.

I was then a minister. What a lovely ideal stood before me, as if I had only to grasp it! It still stands before me, but more elevated; it casts from on high its bright beams, its warm glow, on this cold and dark earth. Woe to him who has totally lost it!

III.

NEARER ACQUAINTANCE, OR THE MAGNATES OF THE VILLAGE.

WE had need of some few days, my wife and I, to get our house, our heads, and our hearts into some kind of order; but we had scarcely the time that was barely necessary; for the authorities who were entitled to it expected that I should return in small change the gross visit on Sunday. To myself this was not disagreeable. The Sunday-evening affair was more like the reception which a new Commandant of a town gives his officers and the civil dignitaries than a real making of acquaintance. One must also, and especially in the country, see the people in their own house and yard in order to learn to know them in their natural character.

I will then, gentle reader, take you with me on some of my earliest visits. Taught by experience I shall be the better able to give you a view of the houses we shall enter, than I got myself the first time I saw them, and thus you will by slow degrees become, with me, a townsman of Mastland.

Before I began my visits I thought over the advice of an intelligent friend, and this advice, having by experience found it good, I will impart to whoever may have need of it. "A new comer to a little place," said he, "and especially a young minister, runs a great risk

of forming friendships too suddenly, which he can only get free from very slowly, and rarely without unpleasant circumstances. His first opinion may come to be very much changed; and at times people make advances to him, out of curiosity or with a selfish view, whom he afterwards does not find it easy to get rid of, when he can neither like them nor trust them. It would therefore be advisable for him to be friendly to every one on the first visit, but not to bind himself to any one; to be frank and cordial with all, but to keep his mind to himself; what is reserved may be afterwards easily added, but what is let out too much cannot be so easily taken in again." So far for the advice of my prudent friend; let us now set out.

About the middle of the street of Mastland—it begins or ends at the church and manse—rises a house, that is, as it were, in the mean between the dwelling of a townsman and the homestead of a farmer. The barn, which is built at the back of the house, displays even at some distance its tarred sides and its pointed reed-covered roof; some small attic-windows still retain the old rustic form and the lower windows stand quite out of proportion and far from each other, while at one side of the house they present you a cheese-cellar and a room over it; the glaring yellow colour, with the strong green, strikes the eye even at a distance; all this, in short, gives one the idea of its being the abode of a wealthy farmer. But the hall-door is new-fashioned, and the steps, are marble, and, as a pendent to the cheese-cellar, we observe on the other side large panes of glass and Venetian blinds; there is also a handsome brass bell at the side of

the door; all this makes us look on it as the dwelling of a well-to-do townsman. Close to the house is the garden, enclosed by nothing more than a low paling and thus exposed to general admiration. Here too is an arbour with its box-hedges, and tulips and marigolds are growing in an English grassplot. However, in order to explain the riddle we must make a nearer acquaintance with the inhabitants. People are in general pretty much like their houses either within or without.

Be it known then to you that here dwells Peter Abraham Van-der-Zanden, Burgomaster of Mastland *cum annexis*. His father and mother before him lived in this house, but without the Venetian blinds, the marble steps, and so forth. They had made a handsome fortune by dairying and cattle-dealing, and this their only son had increased it considerably by a wealthy marriage, which has never been blessed with children. When a good many years ago, then, the Government began to make it a rule to appoint to the office of burgomaster inhabitants of the place, Van-der-Zanden was nominated to that dignity; not however without a strong, though fruitless, opposition on the part of some other patrician families of Mastland.

But it is time for us to pull the bell. Fortunately thé weather is dry and warm, and so having to wait awhile under the lime-trees will not tire us; for the bell seems to have caused an uncommon sensation in the house. What a pity that we did not know it!—the hall-door is there merely for state, people go in and out at the back-door. Now we must wait patiently. It is my belief that all the people in the house are using their

united strength to get the door to turn on its hinges. 'Twill do—it creaks! There now it is open, and we have a clear view of the interior. We step first on the handsome mat; you should in fact take your shoes off, instead of wiping them on it. But we may now advance with more courage, and are admitted into the parlour, where the sun-blinds when they are drawn up prove nearly as restive as the hall-door.

Peter Abraham Van-der-Zanden enters the room making the bow of a man who is not used to make a low bow. He is now about sixty years of age, corpulent but muscular, and his colour and his bearing indicate vigour. A healthy air pervades his whole frame, and a certain degree of content with himself and his position in the world is spread over his ruddy face; and along with it a cordial friendliness, which however rather looks down on you from its eminence, while the large firm eye has the appearance of being able to look at everything, but not to see through many things.

The seat of honour, the high, broad armchair, was offered to me; and, to preserve my dignity, I could not refuse the offer; although the space between the arms allowed me to sit in any position I pleased and room to spare.

We are now just both of us, each armed with a pipe, beginning at the same time to say, "What a lovely day it is, Burgomaster!"—"'Tis really splendid weather, Dominie!" when at that moment the Burgomaster's wife enters the room, and I stand up, lay down my pipe, and make a bow.

What shall I say of the person that came in? I

really know not what to say. Hers was one of those faces that you would lose among half-a-dozen; if there is any distinguishing trait, it is the rigid features which might pass for perplexity just as well as for solemnity. Her dress is more noticeable, from a certain variance with itself; her cap and golden head-ornament do not accord with her gown, nor the make of this with the material; and I was for a moment in doubt, whether I should say Ma'am to her head or Madam to her person.*

After the first questions, "Do you take sugar and milk, Dominie?" "Have you lighted your pipe?" "Is Mrs. —— well?" etc., a dialogue ensued in which only the Burgomaster and myself took part, and he by far the larger part. It was however extremely interesting for me, and it was resumed and continued once or twice more on my succeeding visits. The subject was the first origin of Mastland and the embanking of the *polder*† thereto appertaining, the means of living of the inhabitants, and especially his own trade of grazier. This *discours* with the Dominie has now lasted four years, and probably had lasted twenty years before, and every visitor of mine who calls with me on the Burgomaster finds it still extremely *intéressant*.

I have little more to say at this moment, of my nearer acquaintance and intercourse with the Burgomaster and his spouse. I pay him regular visits, but not

* I use these terms Ma'am and Madam for the Dutch *Juffrouw* and *Mevrouw*; the former of which is used of young women, married or single, the latter of those of more advanced age or higher rank. Thus where three lines further on I use Mrs., it is *Juffrouw*.

† Land recovered from the sea.

very frequent ones; he visits me on festival occasions, or by extraordinary invitation. I believe that I should gratify him if I drank more, and his wife if I ate more. Every winter, seated by a huge turf-fire, we go once or twice more over his *intéressant discours.** The remainder is not *intéressant,* though it might be so, especially on the subject of disputes or difficulties among the people, by the Burgomaster's authority, which gives weight, though no intrinsic value, to what he says.

My second visit was to the man with whom I had already made acquaintance on the occasion of my probation-sermon, and at a later period when he brought me the call. This last is, as the reader knows, or mayhap knows not, one of the very various emoluments out of which the income of a country schoolmaster, as dean of guild of the beggars is cobbled up.

The school, which is nearly opposite my house, did not present a very attractive appearance on my first coming to Mastland. The roof let in the rain, the windows were low, the walls cracked, the floor damp, and the building hardly large enough to allow the Mastland youth to be crowded on the forms, and thus to pack the school full of them; while the upper classes alone were furnished with narrow desks; and in the winter the footstool of the little pulpit had to accommodate some girls. I entered the school first, on purpose, in order to see the Master in the full vigour of his occupation, and desired him to go on quietly, while I sat down on one of the forms. But this

* The humour seems to lie in his placing the adjective in the Dutch instead of the French mode.

quietly was no such easy matter; for the restless little ones had so much to whisper one another about me, and the master was so anxious that they should be just now as attentive, as smart, and active as possible, that no one was rightly at his ease but myself. Luckily or unluckily it was the month of May, and the big boys had left school to return to the farm-work, so I could draw my breath more freely; but at the same time the master could not give me any great specimen of the progress of his pupils.

I had a peculiar feeling when I beheld the man of knowledge and skill in his profession so zealously exerting himself among a parcel of children, the eldest of whom was perhaps ten years old. How various, thought I, is the life of man! While many are glittering on the great and busy scene of the world, this man is destined year after year to pack the same narrow slips of knowledge into the brains of little peasants, just as the shop-boy puts his pounds of snuff into the paper bags and weighs them. Year after year must he open the school-door, in order to let out a few reading, writing, and ciphering generations, just as the fresh swarms go out of the bee-hives, till at length his hand grows thin, raised to the A B C or the book-shelf, his eye stiffened with shooting out threatening glances, and his hair turned grey in a damp, dull dungeon. He is for ever moving in the first fragmentary elements of knowledge; he is for ever living among little birds who sing for him in the cage, but fly away from him as soon as the door is open; he has youth about him for ever, and advancing old-age within. But, all things considered, is not man as well adapted for the lowest as for the highest departments?

and who can prove to us that the web is smaller to the spider than the Polar Sea to the whale?

I was still sitting there and musing, and never heard the dull booming of the clock striking twelve, when I was awakened from my reverie by a general tumult. The impatient ear of childhood had hardly heard the long-expected stroke of the clock, when the biggest of the boys jumped up off the form, and in a shrill voice bawled out a prayer, to which no one listened but myself. Then all the little ones broke loose at once, and tumbled over one another, without minding the extraordinary word of order, which was given in honour of me, groped among and turned over the heap of wooden shoes,* till every one had got his own; and then up the street with them, now breaking loose from each other, now crowding together again, just like the sportive swarms of gnats on a summer evening. The schoolmaster led them with upraised hand to the middle of the street, followed them with a close eye till they were past the Burgomaster's door, and then with hearty cheerfulness took me into his own dwelling.

This dwelling, which one would rather term bad than good, made a favourable impression after the schoolhouse. I was introduced into a neat room, where everything was simple and good, and in which the Mistress—for the Master's wife also is so styled here—was sitting at work in a corner by the window, opposite her only child, her Molly. We were already aware that the Mistress was a good, obliging woman, of a grave appearance, but showing a friendly simplicity in her countenance and

* The wooden shoes (*klompen*) are taken off and left at the door.

in all her actions. She was one of those pleasant, agreeable people whose face expresses that her few and moderate wishes have all been fulfilled. Her Molly was her very image, the whole mother in miniature; the smooth, even-plaited cap, the calm pale countenance, the tight jacket and the pocket on the side, the slippers, and her work, all only differing in proportion; and it was with difficulty one could persuade oneself, that she did not belong to a smaller race instead of in reality to the girls of fourteen years.

With respect to Master Herman Balyon himself, it was quite plain to be seen at the very first glance that he united in his own person all the wisdom of the house and of the school, the cheering beams of which diffused themselves over wife and daughter, as well as over the young fry of the school. His head stood still erect, though sixty and five years had turned his hair to grey; and his eyes went continually, like the pendulum of a clock, regularly to the right and left; while his wife read in them the solution of every matter of any consequence. That respectable head was however wont to bow, and those eyes to cast themselves down, in the presence of the Minister, be he old or new, in years or youthful, just as the grey-headed officer, stern and rough before his company, respectfully casts down his eyes in the presence of a youthful General. He belonged to the Masters of the last century, who were wont to bring their hymn-books with them on Sunday, to set the glass of water on the pulpit, and also through the week to consider it an honour to render any little services to the Minister. I estimate highly the improvement in primary instruction;

but I cannot see that the presumption of many of the young teachers has had a good effect on their own fortune or the pedantry of their own order, any more than on the peace of the community or the good order of divine service. The ambition however of Master Balyon did not go so far and high; as he swayed his sceptre over the rising generation he bowed low before every minister that came in. He himself raked the churchyard, and his wife swept the dust off the seats. In this we were both fortunate, and we got on together on such friendly terms that the silently acknowledged superiority of my office never made me haughty or was an impediment to him.

I spent, then, a very agreeable morning in the schoolhouse also, as I afterwards did many a one. Our conversation was frank and cordial, notwithstanding a comical precision in his pronunciation of every word; and the information I got here on church affairs was of as much importance and even fuller and of more value than the *intéressant discours* of the Burgomaster.

My third visit was to the aged country-doctor, or, as the peasants say, to the Master, or—as they say to distinguish him from the teacher—to the Surgeon-Master. The old man received me with patriarchal hospitality. He inspired me with all the reverence which I so gladly show to grey hairs. His family consisted only of himself and a servant-maid, also advanced in years. For nearly fifty years he had practised here, where he was universally beloved on account of his noble anxiety to relieve suffering, and his quiet character. No one had ever heard that he was a learned man; people only knew

that he had been taught to use the lancet and the razor by an uncle of his on the mother's side; but he gave pills in gold-leaf to the Burgomaster, and in liquorice to the country-people; he cured their children of the heart-burn; he knew how to bleed the farm-servants for the pleurisy, and to give the girls tartar-emetic for the bile, just as readily and three times as cheap as his successor. What did it signify to Mastland where he got his knowledge? And if the disease was of a more unusual kind, why he did neither good nor harm; the peasants rode to town with a vial and . . . at home, and Nature did the rest; or else the patient died, without being tortured by Art, and leaving her his heir. In short, I have looked through the town-accounts on this subject, and the bills of mortality give no perceptible difference between his and the following years; they even perhaps testify rather in his favour.

The worthy old man made me on this and other occasions better acquainted with the ways and the mode of thinking of the Mastlanders than anyone else. He had marked the progress of every difficulty, without his passions being excited, unless it were occasionally in the case of the poor; and I am indebted to him for many a friendly and useful piece of advice. In the course of the year also he prescribed simples for my chest, and he administered magnesia to my first little one. In my second year he grew feeble and sank, and he said to me with a quiet smile, "The lamp is going out; I have no oil for it in my shop;" so he took to his bed. He sent for me, at last, in the middle of the night. "I should not perhaps have done so," said he with a feebler voice,

"as it is such an unseasonable hour; but I wished to bid you good-bye. I believe, and I die cheerfully;—follow my example when your own time comes." And the old man died in my arms, the death of Jacob. May he rest in peace!

It was my original intention, gentle reader, to take you round with me on my remaining visits to the constituted authorities; but I begin to perceive that it would probably prove monotonous and tiresome to you; as for me, I was under obligation to weary myself, but it is not so with you. As there is no notary or tax-gatherer in the village, the first and most needful part is completed with the description of the three Masters and the Dominie; for I describe myself also, without any remorse. As to the rest of the people we shall gradually get acquainted with them, and if this is not the case, why, you have no great loss.

But to bring you to the actual condition of society in Mastland I must fill up a vacancy, namely, that of the worthy departed old man. As soon as he had laid down his head and was gone to rest, the following advertisement appeared in the 'Haarlem Courant:'

"WANTED in Mastland, a thriving place of about a thousand souls, a COUNTRY DOCTOR. To this situation is attached a gratuity of one hundred and fifty gulden, for which the poor must be attended gratis. A house and ground, in which this business has been conducted with advantage during a term of fifty years, may also be had."

This advertisement was the result of numerous deliberations, even during the illness of the old man. In reality it was the product of the talent and knowledge of the world of Mr. Duifhuis, who was usually consulted

on similar occasions. The difficulty that was to be obviated, was this, that at present country-doctors are forbidden to attend the poor *by contract*. But here Mr. Duifhuis—with whom we shall soon get better acquainted —to the astonishment of even the Burgomaster himself, made the shrewd discovery that this might be arranged under the name of gratuity. The doctor would then have enough for three months, and the poor-box would have ease for years.

To my heartfelt joy, an early candidate was one who, in addition to testimonials of his ability, had already had some years' practice. I freely acknowledge the necessity of requiring proofs of study and knowledge, but I am slow to receive them. It seems to me that the first fire of an Æsculapius must be of a deadly nature, when their later and calmer zeal may still prove so dangerous.

The person who, by the unanimous choice of the governors of the town and of the poor, became the successor of our venerable Master, was named Pierre du Meaux. His foreign name was the first and not unimportant difficulty when he came to settle in Mastland. After having had recourse to the philology of Master Balyon, the countryfolk succeeded in translating the first part of his name; but for the interpretation of the second part they saw no chance, and they were satisfied with mutilating it, so that of the whole foreign name, by the tacit understanding of the whole community, nothing remained but Piet Moot.

Notwithstanding his French name, our new surgeon is a true-born Dutchman. He possesses that name as a descendant of the Refugees, as they are called, and has re-

tained nothing of this origin but black hair, a dark, lively eye, and a certain quickness and rapidity of ideas.

His first visit, and mine to welcome him to his house, convinced me at once that he would be an acquisition; if it were only by forming an agreeable variation to the uniform course of my ordinary conversation. His education, general knowledge, reading, and manners, distinguished him completely from the rest of the people of the village, so that they were almost obliged to fall sick in order to have some point of contact with him. His wife too and mine were not unsuited. Smart, tasty, and musical, and not without a spice of coquetry, she formed a valuable contrast to the stiff country-women and the worthy Mistress. Finally a couple of nice children, to which another was soon added, promised to grow up playfellows with mine. Still, having before me the advice of my wise friend, I held off a little, and no doubt appeared rather stiff in the eyes of the lively doctor, who felt a necessity for polished intercourse, and even loved learned conversation. While he, even before breakfast-time, would jump over my paling, and drag me away to show me how he was laying out his garden, I used on purpose to let a week pass, now and then, without calling on him. People, thought I, come to us with their best side foremost; but when they have done that once and again, and become used to us, they then forget to exercise that restraint and turn round about. We should then wait at least so long, before we form an intimacy with them. And this holding back was of especial need here, for as Du Meaux had a natural antipathy to the stiff character and the limited range of ideas of the

country-folk, he would thus, out of pure weariness and want of society, be apt to become an enthusiastic and possibly a troublesome friend. I wished therefore, before I yielded to this pressure, to see how he got on with the sick, with our town-society, and with my people in general.

It was very soon apparent that he applied himself with all the energy of his character to the treatment of his patients. As far as we laymen could judge, he exhibited in this a more than ordinary degree of skill; and the cure of some inveterate diseases, with which the old man had for many years maintained an unbroken truce, won him the general confidence. But he insisted on having this confidence on all occasions, and he could not listen with equanimity to a patient's description of the internal state of his body according to a peculiar rustic system of anatomy, or saying that his medicines were too nasty to be taken, or too violent to be endured. In society he remained as he had appeared from the commencement, lively, easy, unconstrained. Wherever he was, people did not meet with those disagreeable pauses, by which the conversation sinks back into itself, just as the fire gets buried under its own ashes, and is with difficulty roused up again. The only thing that annoyed me on those occasions was his mordacious wit, which naturally found matter enough to work on, and which no one in our village could cope with. Sometimes it fell on our good Master Balyon and his quiet household, then on these or those of his patients; nay, the lofty dignity of the Burgomaster himself was not always spared. For my own part I have always preferred

good-natured irony or lively humour to bitter satire, which by its very nature is cold and heartless. But I would particularly recommend caution, to one thus inclined, if he lives in a small place. Where jest is answered by jest, the one causes the other to be forgotten; but where people comprehend slowly and have not quickness enough to make a smart reply, they remember long and bear a silent dark feeling of revenge. It is moreover, in a small place, almost more dangerous to attack a person in his absence than to his face, especially by a smart saying which is easily retained; for where there is little new the slightest thing is regarded as such, and the evil is at least doubled. And in this behold the abundant source of numerous unpleasantnesses which Du Meaux has already created for himself and will still create, by far more than he would have caused, if one or other of his patients had died too soon; for probably in that case the heirs would have become his friends.

And what now are the magnates of my village, and the last named especially, regarded as members of my congregation? It may be that this question is but slightly interesting to the reader, but it is by so much the more so to myself. In this respect I can say nothing of my Burgomaster, but that he literally attends faithfully to his religion; for I have never discovered anything in him, which in the full force of the word I could term belief or unbelief; and of Master Herman Balyon, that he piously believes all that my predecessors and myself have taught, and by anticipation all that I shall teach in future. This was the very point on which I was most curious to know on what footing I should be with our

new doctor. I very speedily observed that he was by no means regular in his attendance at church; and very soon after that he wished me to regard his appearance there as a personal compliment. From time to time he complimented me on my enlightened views, or on the beauties of my style, especially when I had spoken on some physical or moral subject, more rarely when my subject was a strictly Christian one. From these I conjectured what I should find him to be, and on a nearer acquaintance I saw that I was not mistaken.

If I were writing a romance now, what an excellent opportunity for a dialogue, in which the exalted dignity of Christianity would be displayed triumphant in heart-stirring tones; by which the adversary would be driven out of the field into his last fortress, which should be taken vigorously by storm, and of which the joyous conclusion would be *an infidel converted!* But with shame I must confess it, I have never succeeded in converting a sinner or an unbeliever in a single conversation. I always, speak as I would, arrived at a point where the dialogue was broken off in ill-humour, or came back, as in a circle, to the place it set out from. In the former case the opponent went away angry, and soon let it be seen by his actions that silence was very far from being consent. And in the latter he began to canter round the same circle of ideas, the longer the harder, so that it was full time to make an end of it.

The conclusion at which I have arrived is, that whenever any one is firmly resolved not to be convinced, argument does more harm than good; and that when he errs honestly, we should never allow ourselves, as there

is no urgent necessity for an instantaneous decision, to drive him to the uttermost. It is quite enough if we excite ideas in him by means of which he may either convert himself or God may convert him,—in my opinion a matter of no great difference. If we press any one too hard, and give too much offence to his self-esteem, we but impede his conversion. The pot which is continually stirred froths up no doubt, but does not boil; to do that it must be left for a moment to itself.

With respect, then, to Pierre du Meaux, when we had been some time acquainted he very soon let his mode of thinking appear. If the conversation fell on the subject of the divine authority of Revelation, on the great importance of the doctrine of Atonement, or the truth of a general Resurrection, then it was, "Well, really I think it a very good thing that the people should believe all that, but you must agree with me that a man of sense cannot bring himself to do so" . . . In fact, he was a rather superficial free-thinker. I did not therefore succeed when in confidential discourse I explained to him the doctrines of the Gospel; but he fell in with me so far that he had on the whole a sincere respect for religion and morality.

This way of thinking was not by any means new to me, nor unexpected; nay, to a certain extent it was not unwelcome to me, just as a new kind of disease would have been welcome to him, amid the uniformity of the ailments of the country-people. What most annoyed me was, that on more than one occasion he could not restrain this tendency of his at the meetings of our little reading-society, and thus made an ill use of his powers in disturbing the simple faith of our country-folk. This

affected a few worthy rustics, like the unexpected apparition of a comet announcing evil. The Burgomaster opened his eyes wider than usual, and drank his glass out at one pull, and Herman Balyon ran out of the room; while I, seeing the necessity of it on such an occasion, spoke more seriously and decidedly than is my usual custom in society.

I seized a favourable opportunity for convincing Du Meaux that his duty as a man called on him not to bring forward his views among people who could not comprehend them, and who would therefore only be confused and made uncomfortable. I succeeded in working on his natural goodness of heart, and as I have often observed that self-interest is the best security for good conduct, I talked to him of the injury it was likely to do him in his profession. This operated upon him, and thenceforth he has been content with giving a mysterious and mocking laugh, which the Mastland people are not very quick at comprehending.

I have, moreover, frequently conversed in a friendly way with him on religious subjects, and I have reason to think that he has now more doubts as to the truth of his opinions than his self-love will permit him to confess; at the same time I have never sought to draw a confession from him.

And now, reader, just as if you had been for some days living with me, you begin thus gradually to get acquainted with the state of society in Mastland.

IV.

THE RENTIER* OF THE VILLAGE.

WE have commenced our acquaintance with such of the inhabitants of Mastland as from their station in society feel it a right, and some a duty, to wear a black coat; and we are to take the rest of the population, consisting of mechanics, shopkeepers, and peasants, in the mass. But a short time before my coming to the place, the limited number of the gentry and of the black-coats received the addition of a member—a *rentier*; and as he is not included in our usual village classification, I feel myself under the necessity of devoting an entire chapter to the description of his person.

Should my little work have the honour to fall into the hands of many readers in large towns, they may probably say, "Is a *rentier* then a person of such consequence? or is it merely playing the author he is to fill his book?" Yes, readers, he *is* among us a person of consequence.

Observe now, the value of most things depends on their rarity. Pebbles and potatoes differ from diamonds and pine-apples by their abundance. With you, especially in the great commercial cities, there are people

* *Rentenaer.* I find myself obliged to use the French word *rentier*, as we have not a term in English to indicate a man who lives on his property, be it large or small.

enough and a superfluity of men of property. There any one is a *rentier* who runs against you while you are busily employed. At best you think him to be useful, as a sort of watering-pot, to divide and scatter large sums of money in small portions; or like the famous dog Munito, to occupy a place at the chess-board or the card-table. Beyond this he has no voice in the affairs of the world. There is moreover a natural antipathy between a *rentier* and a trading-town. Employment and dearness are two diseases that are endemic there, and to which he has a mortal aversion. Hence it is that every spring, in the month of May, a crowd of people of this kind, going into the country, usually pass out at the gates and spread themselves near and far.

But it is very rarely that any of the wanderers stray into our parts. *Rentiers*, regarded as birds of passage, are disposed to ramble in order to kill with their utmost powers their greatest enemy, Time. Wherever there are any of them—they prefer a cheap and retired village or a town in miniature—the others spontaneously resort thither.

It was a matter of general amazement then, that in the spring of 1839 a carriage stopped at our court-house, containing a *rentier*. He had heard, I know not how, that we had a neat private house on sale, in which a short time before an old and single man, a farmer, the only *rentier* in the place, had died, and he was not disinclined to continue the same mode of life in this house, if it suited him. The heirs, who were quite at a loss to know what to do with a house without a shop or a dairy, were right glad to deal, and Mr. Duifhuis bought the

place for a reasonable sum; though it would certainly have cost him less, if he had employed an agent and the *rentier* had remained behind the scenes.

But I must make you somewhat better acquainted with the antecedents of our friend, as I have learned them from time to time on good authority.

Adrianus Duifhuis (*Dovecote*)—a distinguished name! —is a man of good family. His parents were people of substance, and it was his misfortune that he became too soon aware of this fact. His simple-minded mother was so absorbed in her only son, so afraid lest he should expose himself to needless suffering, that at every task she reminded him, "Janus dear, don't distress yourself too much; you are not to earn your bread by it, boy!"— Now if Janus had been of a sluggish temper, he would have done nothing, but have passed his days in idleness and luxurious enjoyment on his paternal property. This, however, was repugnant to his nature, as it also was contrary to the wishes of his father. While a lad then he decided on the study of medicine; but he found the Latin grammar a rather bitter pill, and *as he was not to earn his bread by it,* he troubled his head very little about it. His father moreover asserted that a doctor must learn to cure the sick by use and practice, and not by speaking Latin, and so Janus came to the university without anyone's rightly knowing how he had managed to come there. Here he became a good patriot but a bad physician; and when the coming of the French determined the political controversies, he began at last to perceive what a pile of difficulties he had yet to contend with before he could become an M.D. So with the sincerest

inclination for this profession, he gave it up for good, after an attempt or two to pass his examination, *for he was not to earn his bread by it.* This cost him no inconvenience. His mother was afraid of the infection from the sick, to which there was no need to expose oneself, *as it was not necessary,* and his father soon provided him with a situation which though not profitable was respectable. Here he found himself in his right place, and his republican way of thinking made him perform his duties with red-hot zeal. But things took another turn, our country was incorporated in the French Empire, and Duifhuis, whose parents were dead by this time, could not manage well with his French, and he resigned his situation, as he need not remain in employment longer *than he liked.* After that he ventured to engage in trade; in this he was zealous and active enough, but he had too little knowledge of it, and he could not adopt the frugal mode of living and the prudent conduct of the trading class; what need he? *he was a man of property,* so he was in general too late on 'Change, was continually making enemies among the leading merchants, and remained at last with useless wares and unpaid-for goods on his hands. But where was the necessity for regular trade? Was not speculation always far more agreeable *when one had not to earn his bread by it?* He speculated then in stocks, and grew in high favour with Greeks, Columbians, Cortes, and all possible Liberals; for he readily believed what he hoped. Unluckily Liberty is but a sorry financier, and Duifhuis began to discern, just in time, that though no doubt he had not to *labour* for his bread, it still was

necessary to *keep* something for it. He accordingly collected the remains of his property, and looked out for some quiet, little-frequented nook; for his late adventures had inspired him with an utter aversion for every one that bore the name of citizen. And this aversion is so deeply rooted in him, that when my good uncle John, of whom he has not the slightest knowledge, comes to the village, his window-curtains are kept closed the whole day.

When I had learned all this, I was rather surprised that after having thus passed from one thing to another, like a key that will not fit, he should look so gay and healthy, that one would in fact pronounce him to be ten years younger than he really is. But when I came to know him more intimately, I saw that, in addition to a sound and regular state of health, he was indebted for it to his self-esteem. He never strained his mind too much, hardly indeed enough, on any occasion; and he moreover never threw the blame of failure on himself, but always on circumstances. Violent emotions have never agitated him, more especially after his republican enthusiasm had cooled a little. He never was very eager after money, and at the same time he never knew the want of it. Taking all things together, he never rowed against the stream, but always let himself be carried along by it, till his bark came here to land.

I believe now that he will end his days here. He has reached that time of life in which every year repose becomes more and more desirable and pleasant; the little events and troubles of village life give occupation enough to the activity which he still retains; and moreover he

is here—what he never could be in a larger place—a person of consideration.

Accordingly Mr. Duifhuis is amazingly busy, and yet quite at his ease. He carries on here, on a small scale, the speculations which did so badly with him on a large scale. He plants now this, now that kind of potato; to-day he sells his topping-hens, to buy bantams instead of them to-morrow; and in doing so he meets on a small scale the very same kind of friends as he met on a large scale on the stock-exchange. But his self-esteem in general convinces him that he has made a good bargain or exchange; and as his income is, for Mastland, somewhat large, he has something over to waste on follies of this sort.

We have thus made a real acquisition in our *rentier*; first and foremost by his consumption and expenditure,—a thing not to be forgotten in a small place,—and then by his bringing some animation into the village. Ha! look! there he is now, standing just before my paling; a spade on his shoulder, the right leg of his trousers dirtied, his morning-gown full of cobwebs. What can be the matter? He beckons. "Yes, yes, Mr. Duifhuis, I'm coming, I'm coming." . . .

I am quite tired of it. What business has the good man got involved in? I guessed what it was: it is all about the fence of the churchyard. He was made last year a member of our church-executive, a thing by no means disagreeable to me, for it wanted some yeast in it; and now he trots through the church, and over this churchyard, and through my house and garden, and

there he has just now crept along the church-wall, and through the fence, to prove that people can get through it, and that it is too old and too bad to be left standing in this condition. It is inconceivable to him how the Burgomaster can look on it with an indifferent eye, and how churchwardens can pass along it four times on a Sunday without losing all the edification they got from the service. He has made a personal examination of the ground, in order to find in Uilkens what kind of timber will grow best there. No one can get more than a casual word out of him, unless it be about the fence of the churchyard. In consequence of this his tulip-bulbs are put into the ground too late, and how on earth will it be with the planting of his potatoes this year?

You thus see that, even in Mastland, Adrianus Duifhuis is a true patriot; that is to say, a man full of plans of improvement, who has at heart the public weal, and neglects his own; who puts theories into practice, and applies science to the interest of the people—he hates aristocracy and lukewarmness like the plague—in a word, a patriot; and it is not his fault that all the trees in Mastland are not transplanted, and all the public buildings renovated.

But be this as it may, such a person was really wanted, on account of the general slow pace. Duifhuis may have been imprudent when a young man, and headstrong as an old man, but he is upright and well-meaning; and as he has seen somewhat more of the world than the country-folk in general, and thence as an independent citizen does not feel the utmost reverence for our village authorities, he has set some needful improvements

a-going, over which our villagers had been talking, and no more than talking, for five-and-twenty years round a blazing fire and with a pipe of good tobacco.

It is self-evident that in this way Duifhuis does not always live in peace and quiet. Should he have a matter of any consequence on hand, he is pestering and immovable; and he would be odious and unendurable, were it not that there was an enemy who has certainly got the better of him—Time. It is not possible for him to be anxious about the same thing three months long, or to look sourly three months long on the same person. He has been always too much used to get out of the way of lasting difficulties and disagreeable contacts. So the few times that I have had a little skirmish with him, the tactics of tiring him out by keen perseverance have succeeded uncommonly well with me.

But beside his activity and patriotism there is something else which causes him annoyance. He is still in his own eyes—the only thing he ever was with heart and soul—a doctor. When he came here the worthy old surgeon was on the decline, and there was thus an opportunity for Duifhuis to give physic to an odd patient out of his private medicine-chest. But soon after came Pierre du Meaux, and he could not endure the idea of a man of skill and education sharing his practice with a benevolent quack. And there was some likelihood of such being the case. My worthy country-folk have at all times more veneration for the skill that is extraordinary, than for the knowledge that has been acquired in a regular way; Duifhuis moreover converses more freely with them; and, what is of most importance, the very

same medicines operate with greater effect when given by him, as a Mastland patient is far better cured when he is cured *for nothing*. Matters in fact came to such a pass that the Medical Board would have interfered, and I had much ado to prevent it.

"And now what sort of a man is our *rentier* with respect to conversation? What are his ideas? What are his principles?"

Well, reader, I hardly know if, in the strictest sense of the word, I can ascribe to my friend Duifhuis any ideas and principles at all. It all depends on what you understand by them. If you suppose serious reasoning, and conclusions and decisions resulting from it on the most important objects of human life, you will find no such thing in Duifhuis. You may talk as much as you like in his presence on abstract and elevated subjects, and he will sit in silence, provided he has a pipe, but he does not listen, they have no interest for him. If by chance he understands any part, for he is not so very dull by nature, most surely he does not retain it: and you must offend him in some way, or treat of the affairs of the day, in which he wholly lives, in order to move him to an answer. Last year he was at my house along with Balyon and Du Meaux. We were talking on a subject of natural science, and our conversation took a good and a religious turn; I got rather into an ecstasy, and was just beginning to say something of the wonders of the starry heaven, when Duifhuis interrupted me with "But, Dominie, can you conceive how it is that bacon should be still so dear, now that feed is so cheap?"

Still, however, leaving *ideas* out of the question, I

should be acting very wrong if I were to call my good Duifhuis a man devoid of *principles*. He certainly has maxims which direct his judgement and his conduct, and which stand as firm as a Gothic wall. I am even quite positive that years ago he meditated on them; but they have been now, for a long time past, settled matters with him. He has retained the conclusions, and forgotten the reasonings which led to them, and his principles now hover in the air just as a rope-dancer does, who has flung down the ladder by means of which he got up on the rope. He proves these notions of his by continually repeating them to every one who will or who will not listen, and he refutes every objection by this powerful argument, "I say it, and I will maintain it."

These maxims of his derive in general from the time when he was yet in the habit of thinking, when he was a doctor and a patriot; unfortunately he then got a moral training, but no religious education, and in a character like his the loss is irreparable. Later experience has increased these maxims by the addition of a few more, so that no very long study is requisite of the man himself, or his way of life, to write them all on a sheet of paper, and to set down the date of their first origin. I will now give a brief specimen:

1780–87. (*Time of his childhood.*)

A liar or a rascal is not worth a pull by the nose; so say *I*.

1787–95. (*The patriotic period.*)

I *do* say it: a man is not a beast, and he that lets himself be trampled on is a fool.

All kings and princes are devourers, nothing else. Every man his own creed, every man his own liberty! that is my motto.

1792–96. (*His medical studies.*)

Nature goes beyond all: early to bed and early to rise, that's the truth. That keeps me in health.

They may teach us what they will, I'll not give up: death is death, and as to what come after it, we must expect it.

1804. (*The year of his only serious illness.*)

Listen now; when it comes to that, every one is concerned about No. 1, and therefore every one should attend to his religious duties, each in his own church.

N.B.—This principle seems to have driven the preceding one rather into the background, so that it only made its appearance when he was in good spirits, and never in my presence.

1820–38. (*The period of most of his mercantile dealings and speculations.*)

No one can prove to me that trade is anything else than knavery, and a trader than a robber.

1839–42. (*His settling in the country.*)

He who has no need of the world (that is the city-world) is, in my eyes, a fool if he stays in it.

I find a village far better than a city; for people there have less knowledge of roguery, and less time to become rogues.

There then, you have Adrianus Duifhuis. In my position I am on a good footing with him. In accordance with his maxim of the year 1804, and from a certain

feeling of propriety, he is a regular attendant at our church, makes a good figure in his handsome three-gulden seat, and sings with a clear though somewhat tremulous voice. But I can never get into confidential conversation with him on the subject of religion, and have never been able to use, to any advantage with him, the power of religious argument. Whatever good he does must be the result of his own maxims, or rather of his natural goodness of heart.

At one time he made me rather savage with his battles about hens, goats, and garden-fences, and I saw that it was full time to speak seriously to him in a friendly way. I had sat nearly three hours with him, and patiently listened to all his plans and his complaints. I will, however, spare the reader the details: let it suffice that I tried to induce him to yield up some of his claims out of Christian charity; but, without directly contradicting me, he continually flung at my head some of his well-known positions, and then went over his narrative afresh. At last I saw that I was making no way, so I took leave of him, in order that I might go before I should get angry and severe. It was then evening. I came home and sat down by the fireside, looking so steadily at the curling flame, that my good Cornelia had twice offered me a cup of coffee before I observed it. She then put her arm on my shoulder, and gave me a kiss, and said, "Come, William, why do you sit there moping? What crotchet have you got in your head now?"

I was not unwilling to unburden my heart, which was so full; so I answered, "Yes, dear Kee, I am just come from Duifhuis's, and I have been annoyed and grieved;

and yet with all that I have once more discerned the wisdom of the Divine dispositions. When I came from the University, that school for the exercise of the noblest powers of our mind, and saw the people here in the country toiling and slaving as they do, I said to myself, 'Why must rational beings devote so large a portion of their valuable time to mere earthly, worthless things? Why must man, who has so short a time to live, work like a pack-ass or a plough-horse, so that he has hardly a moment left him for reflection?' But now I see it more and more each day, that it is a beneficent arrangement, since those who are exempted from the general law, *In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread,* are more unendurable than those who toil. I have known more than one *rentier,* but seldom a wise, and still seldomer a happy one. It is then right, it appears, that it should be so, but still it is a sad thing that most men require the whip to make endurable beings of them."

"And what do you suppose to be the cause of this, William?"

"It appears to me, Cornelia, that while any one is obliged to work hard, as he has his hands full, the emptiness of his mind and heart is undiscovered, and his passions have not time to develope all their powers; but remove this constraint, and his inanity comes to light, and he is as wearisome to himself and others, as the child that is home for the holidays; and then his passions grow turbulent, because his reason is weak. So the *rentier* is a wearisome and an insignificant personage, and yet he might be so good and so useful."

"And what would you require of a *rentier,* William?

Is it not enough that he pays away his money, comes regularly to church, keeps a she-goat and some hens, and is no further an annoyance to the neighbours? What more do you want of the man? *He's not obliged ever to do it,* as Mr. Duifhuis says, *in order to get his bread.*"

"'Tis just because he is not obliged to do it for his bread, that he could do what another has not the means of doing. If I had my will, there should be only two kinds of these *rentiers*—the philosopher and the Christian. The philosopher should thus have time and means for the active idleness of which ancient sages speak, that is, for developing, ennobling, and refining his own mind, and for practising and advancing useful sciences. But, alas! most men's brains are closed up at a certain time of life, and accordingly no more tickets of admission are issued. And the Christian, if he were a *rentier,* should have time and money to enable him to live in the sight of others the life which is the happiest and most useful of all. But now most *rentiers* have not intellect to be philosophers, or hearts to be Christians; they are mere dirty, grumbling, headstrong people, pests to themselves and to every one else, burdens to society . . ."

"Heigh-ho! William, that is trotting along indeed! Now shall I just say a word or two? Let your philosopher and your Christian work; there is time enough both for thinking and for doing good if they wish to do so; and if they do not work, they will then catch the *rentier's* disease; for in my opinion it is infectious. For example, my husband would very likely become a man-hater if he were a *rentier.*"

"You're jesting, Keetye, and yet I would not take it

on me to say that you are altogether wrong. But still it is a sad thing that such should be man!"

"Listen to me. Do you know what you are doing? Just say with a serious voice: *Who can make all the crooked straight?* And when you have said that, drink your cup of coffee, for it's nearly cold."

I did so, and left to Heaven what I could not alter.

V.

MY FIRST SERMON.

COME, my brethren, who have like me for many years, and for the most part longer than I, trodden this way, do for once what I am doing this moment. On some quiet evening bring once more to the light of day those first essays of yours which were long ago put away into some dark corner of your bookcase, or your desk, and lay them on the table alongside of your present compositions. It is a melancholy pleasure for me then to tread my footprints over again, and to meet once more the *I* of my early days, which otherwise I should hardly recognize any more than the butterfly the sheath of the *pupa* from which he came forth.

When I first came to my present situation I brought with me a precious treasure, twenty sermons, partly the fruits of my time at the University, partly of my probation-days,—sermons that might be delivered at any time and in any place, composed for the most part without any urgency, and all without having a definite congregation in my mind,—mere words in the air, speeches without hearers. Above all, my probation-speeches at the University pleased my fancy; they were worked, and worked over again, and worked thoroughly. They were all preached at Mastland and have the date of their

public delivery on their titlepage. Were they understood? I cannot venture to think it. On the words of our Saviour: *I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,* I had given a handsome sketch of the history of the Church; and on these of St. Peter: *I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance,* I had given a very good account of the origin and the canon of the books of the New Testament; but . . .

Beside this precious collection of sermons, I possessed a *ditto* of outlines, on which I set even a higher value—the hard-won fruits of the composition-course. That composition-course; oh! when I think of it even now, what labour did it not cost me! How neat were the outlines! All the divisions and sub-divisions could be taken asunder and put together again like a child's plaything; the whole closed in like the border in the draught of a skilful architect. And whenever the good professor made his appearance, though we had been toiling at it with excited powers for whole winter-evenings, the plane must be once more set to work and the brush passed over it; but then we took them so cheerfully, and wrote a fair copy out so neatly, and put them away as diamonds of the first water!

It is strange how our judgment alters imperceptibly from day to day, so that we can hardly comprehend how it is that, after a few years and without any sudden bound, we are placed on a totally different point of view. Whenever I take in hand these precious, high-polished outlines, they seem to me mere shadows without substance, mathematical figures without body, skele-

tons that never had life; and I see no chance, even with the best will in the world, of being able to put breath into them or to drive the blood through the veins. And when I set before me our little party of students, so joyous and so lively, so unfit to instruct and to govern others, when we could hardly govern ourselves, sitting round the table with essays,—it seems to me pretty much as if we had learned from a medical professor to feel the pulse on a figure of straw and to examine the tongue of a wooden gaper.

And yet this was not the fault of the worthy and learned professor, but of youth and of the University. Our colleges are well adapted for making divines, but they do not make ministers. These make themselves, or their congregation makes them—by degrees. Our Church wants that regular transition from theory to practice, which cannot be got at the University. The circumstances of the time have produced that legion of probationers, among whom the intermediate state between student and preacher is passed. I believe, and I even see, that this state is of advantage to many; but it is too uncertain, too irregular, too vacant and dispiriting; it is no anteroom into which people are admitted, and where in some sort one instructs the other; it is the street, where people crowd and jostle one another, not knowing whether they will ever be so lucky as to get in.

But I am to speak of my first sermon. I do not count as such the discourses I brought with me; these served for those weeks in which I was wholly occupied with necessary business and with visiting. I speak of the discourses composed at Mastland and for Mastland. How

I did labour the whole of Monday and Tuesday to find a *good* text! for a good text must be one from which a theme, a subject rounded on all sides, may be deduced. In this everything must, or at least, may be contained that can be said on the text, and then the subject must be one that I can manage with ease, or at any rate with satisfaction. But this was the least of my work: the outline, the odious tormenting outline! it must be so nicely arranged, no part must be too large or too small, and there was no professor in Mastland to look over it! First an introduction, whether I had anything to say or not; and then—this however ran then most easily—in the first part the text duly explained, in the second the truth contained therein proved from reason, Scripture, and experience, and in the third concluded with some appropriate observations. In truth I must not be ungrateful; without this method I know not how I should ever have got through it. And now when the outline was ready, what else was to be done? Write —nothing more. The ideas were at hand and the words came of themselves. Now then the committing to memory, that most unpleasant effort, in which, by the way, some periods were made more harmonious, fuller, or better-rounded, and—I was ready. Well then, the delivery? Why, as to this I was sufficiently prepared; I had always learned to move my eyes and hands skilfully, and should have learned to do the same with my feet, if it were not that the pulpit was closed in at the bottom; and I had always been an active member of a debating-society, in which Tollens was spoiled *secundum artem* and Bilderdijk parodied through ignorance.*

* Two distinguished Dutch writers of the present century.

Thus prepared I appeared before the Mastland congregation, and I looked on myself as being pretty far on the way to be, before long, one of the first preachers in the Netherlands, and consequently to have formed my whole congregation into a noble band of Christians, in which all the infidels would have been convinced, all the sinners converted; and, as I confess this ingenuously, I can add with confidence that I had the last infinitely more at heart than the first.

There then I stood in the presence of a congregation of my own. This reflection, even while I was on the pulpit-stairs, drove all my gesticulation out of my head. I further felt myself with a certain anxiety bound to what I had written, and not a bit too much at home there, just at the moment that I was delivering it. Thus one thing and another made my delivery stiff and confused; and some rather too officious friends were so kind as to inform me of the severe judgments that were passed upon it. That was the first hard pill; I have since had to swallow whole boxes of them.

These unfavourable judgments grieved me not only on my own account, but on that of the good cause. It was plain that the truth which I presented must have very little affected the hearers, who had had time to make such bitter criticisms. What could be the cause of this? Not a single proof was omitted; I knew not any fault in the outline, and could discover no topic changed in the sermon. After some reflection I resolved to give closer attention to the looks and the behaviour of my hearers, in order to follow, if possible, my sermon into their souls. At my introduction—as soon as they were

aware that I always had one—they seemed to listen only to the first words. They were then at ease, as I was under weigh, and many of them had some trifle or another to speak of or to do, before the prayer began. At the explanation of the text many were tolerably attentive, some even (at a later period I remarked that these were known and honoured as being well versed in Scripture) pricked up their ears at once. But at the second part, the demonstrative, the state of things was melancholy. The Burgomaster and the oldest Elder then gave the signal by settling themselves in their nook, and many followed their example. Alas! before the last proof had been developed, there sometimes remained but a small body of *hearers*, with Master Balyon for ever at their head, whom a deep sense of his duty always kept from going to sleep. The good man, beside this, did also all he could, and supplied all the Ruling Elders, as well as the front row of women, with—snuff.

But the word *Application* acted like an electric-shock on the dozing congregation. They then stood up, saluted one another, after an odd country-fashion, and looked steadily at me in order to lose nothing of this application of mine. I will candidly own that, as their dullness had annoyed me, so their attention disconcerted me. How, thought I, can people apply to themselves what merely passed over their drowsy ears? and beside this, to omit no part of the proofs, the second part had occupied so much of the sermon that only a few pages had remained for the Application, which, so thought I, follows of itself with every rational being as soon as he is penetrated by a truth. And this got for me from the same sleeping

listeners the remark that my explanation was very good, but that my application was not powerful.

How I did struggle throughout the first year! When the first Christmas required nine services instead of four—no, when I could think no longer on the logical arrangement of my outline, and felt glad, when, by working night and day, I had composed for every service some tolerably intelligible and feeling address; which after all was listened to with not less attention than my highly laboured sermons. And when in the beginning of the following year I was to return to my usual labour—I have a vivid recollection of it—then I sat with my hand under my head, and was afraid the Bible would be too small for me. I should henceforth have no assertion to prove, no vice to correct, no virtue to inculcate, which had not been already proved, corrected, and inculcated. And the number of *good* texts—texts such as I have just described—was scanty indeed.

Meanwhile I learned to know my people more individually, and to attach myself to them; and whenever then, as need drove, I had to make a sermon, one thing or another constantly floated before my mind that I had brought home with me from the houses of my parishioners. One time it was some prevalent erroneous mode of thinking, then vices or disasters, which I had witnessed, then again their comprehension, or the influence on them, of my preaching. I am convinced that in this way I am indebted to my people for forming me to be their pastor and instructor. Many of these circumstances are at this moment present to my mind; but they would probably appear as insignificant to the reader as they are

of importance to myself. I will therefore pass over that period, and only tell how I now try to judge between my first sermons and my present ones.

Whenever I look back now on the tedious throes through which, out of a theologian and a rhetorician, I was born a village-pastor, I never repent of my studies or feel ashamed of my first feeble efforts. Theology, though there is much in it that deters many a one, is a useful and a necessary science; and without having studied it with zeal and judgment, no one can become a distinguished preacher. But we are not on that account to compose theological sermons. It is just as with the foundations of a house—they must be solid, but they must be covered in. A congregation is no more a literary audience, than the Bible is a 'Kritik' of Kant's. People also are no more convinced by the mere regular enumeration of numbered proofs, than they are converted by the pressing of incitements to virtue. It is also quite certain, that if we must first make our hearers good theologians in order to make them good Christians, our blessed heaven will be wonderfully empty.

This was beyond question the main defect of my first sermons. They were too much of the nature of theological disquisitions, and the church of Mastland was not built for a lecture-room. Besides, they were delivered in too stiff a manner, but this I look upon less as a fault than an unavoidable peculiarity of a youthful speaker. I was at that time (in the good sense) an *actor*, as I afterwards became a *speaker*, that is to say I *performed* my pieces; but still they were my own pieces,—I *represented* there, in a faulty manner, what I had thought and felt in

my study; but it was *I* who had thought and felt, and therefore I never repent it. Nay, I am of opinion that no one who is penetrated with the importance of the subject can on such an occasion feel himself quite at ease in the pulpit, and that the young man who really has the self-possession to be a *speaker* will probably soon have the impudence to be a *babbler*.

But when one feels himself more at home in the pulpit and with his own people, how is he then to speak most usefully? This question too I will endeavour to answer from my own experience, although perhaps some people may think it presumptuous and others confused; but as I was at liberty to write of all or nothing, so every one is at liberty to read all or nothing.

What are our sermons? Not theological disquisitions, nor even merely or properly instruction in religion and morality; they are also no first proclamation of the Gospel, such as is the task of missionaries; they are simply addresses to a congregation, and that rather to our own congregation at their public worship of God and the Saviour, addresses in which a portion of God's Word is the foundation, after the pattern of the old Jewish synagogue. This is what the people expect from us; and as I went more among them, I heard them speak only of the *explanation* and of the *application*, and not of the artificial dry second part, at which so many of my auditors had abandoned me.

We are then to *speak* on and according to the Bible to human beings as they are, and as we know them to be, with their mortality and their eternal destination, with their follies and their sins. He then who speaks must

have something to say; something that he knows, or believes, or feels, or wishes; something that burns on his lips, with which he is deeply penetrated. There then is the true principle of our work,—anything else is mere bungling.

It is also not enough that he who speaks thus should be full of the subject *on which* he speaks; he must also be attached to those *to whom* he speaks. In what state are men? Why do they come? How do they hear us? In general they feel, though it be but feebly, their need of religion; but this feeling is asleep in many, in few so strong as to make them listen attentively, as it costs them trouble; it must be awakened; nature must be well shaken up in them. We want to convince them of truths, do we? Very good, but we must first try to induce them to listen to these truths. And when they *do* listen, we must not expect them to receive what has been clearly proved; for most have either no definite ideas on the subject of religious and moral truths, and then they adopt them with the greater difficulty as they are more advanced in years; or they have a narrow range of thought and certain fixed opinions, friends of their youth, from which they will not be separated; whatever agrees with these they will receive,—whatever is at variance with them they reject as false *per se;* and perhaps they reject, at the same time and for ever, you that have enounced it.

Does it appear then that the road to the mind of the majority of our hearers is closed against us? Not quite so; it is merely barricadoed. There are still two ways open to us, from which several bye-paths lead to the brain,—the way to the *conscience,* and the way to the *heart.*

Conscience is in every man an irrefragable witness, which slumbers at times, but rarely falls fast asleep. Even when the understanding hesitates to receive the truth, the conscience is frequently affected by it. Where then should we find the way to it more open than in the house of prayer, where the sinner presents himself before the sight of God? He who hardens himself there is certainly most difficult to move anywhere else.

The *heart* also is in no man entirely closed against noble affections. It may appear as if wild passions had got the complete mastery of him; but as these subside, he becomes capable of gentler emotions. The greatest reprobate lets fall some warm tears at the thought of his mother or his children.

These then are the ways by which our hearers are accessible to us; not exactly to cure them in an instant of inveterate prejudices, or convert them from deep-rooted faults, but to exercise a salutary influence over them, though it may be tedious and imperceptible. But, to do this, we require an ardent and indefatigable zeal in the good cause, and a thorough love of our species, more especially of those who are committed to our charge. Oh! a hearer observes so quickly if you speak to him because you feel an interest in him; just as the child reads in your eyes whether you are fond of children or not. The instruction, the encouragement, and the admonition which you give him as a friend he takes willingly from *you*, while he would reject it from another. I therefore no longer find fault with logic and dogmatic and homiletic science for not having taught me to preach.

And now for the *subject*. What a fool I was to be

so long looking for a *good* text, and being afraid of the Bible not being big enough for me! So often as I enter the church, the place where the Infinite, the Invisible is worshiped, is there not an infinite deal to be said in the glorifying of the incomprehensibly great Being? When I set before me my people and myself with them, sinners as we are—perhaps to-morrow a corpse—men with their infinitely varied character and destiny, and I open the consecrated pages, is there not an endless variety of things to be learnt out of them, and to be employed for encouragement and for reproof? And though it is not all new or unknown, and though I have myself already spoken on it, has it yet been sufficiently thought on or believed? Certainly not; my life is not long enough for me to say all that I have to say out of my Bible, and in addition to it.

But *how* shall I speak? For when I set zeal and love in the foreground, I do not mean that mild zeal and that soft gentle love which expects to make up for the neglect of an entire week by the earnestness and tender-heartedness of a few minutes. Oh! it is a dangerous crossway for us when once we have uttered an unreflected yet ardent word, and the worthy people are interested by it. All exertion costs labour, and how convenient does it appear to be able to edify without study! "But do we not frequently see that a vigorous word hastily written or thought of off-hand has more effect than a carefully composed speech?" I have myself thought I had experienced this, but on further experience I have discovered that the want of effect did not proceed from my discourse being *carefully* composed, but in reality from its

not being so. Then for the *sudden word*, can that be the right zeal in us which cools down in our study? and is that a permanent impression on the congregation which is so rapidly excited? And when we let ourselves be misled by the approbation of some over-friendly friends, or by the tears of some weak pious souls, so as to avail ourselves again and again of the *sudden word*, should we lay our hand on our heart and answer for the purity of our principle? Should we have advanced the Christian knowledge of our people, their respect for ourselves, our own improvement? Or . . .

But what then are we to aim at, what are we to effect in our sermons? As it seems to me, before all things, *truth, order*, and *simplicity*. The *truth* of what we say must be the fruit of our own indefatigable inquiry. It is the Bible and human nature on which chiefly we should have clear, definite ideas; for I can testify from my own experience that, if we do not awaken clear conceptions, the cause in most cases is that our own ideas are deficient in the requisite lucidity. The only text that I now regard as not *good*, at least not good for me, is the text that I do not perfectly understand.

Now for the *order*. Here my composition-course comes into play, but it is far more in the background than it was four years ago. I will never more declare in favour of any mode of preaching, and I believe that every kind is good provided it is natural and to the purpose. For example, it is natural, if I have anything to say on the subject, that I should make an introduction; but why should I torment myself about it otherwise? The congregation know perfectly well already that they

are in the church, and that they are to say their prayers and hear the Gospel preached. It would even be a hindrance to me to have to deliver an introduction, my mind being full of thanksgiving and prayer. Why then on such an occasion should not the introduction or exordium, if people will have it, come after the prayer?

And now for the sermon itself. The text is to be explained. Very well, if it requires it. The words of Scripture are sometimes quite simple and are well known. This then gives room for an affectionate and useful word to the people. Sometimes it is our express design to make an obscure text, or one that is often wrong-applied, be better understood; then the whole discourse is commentary. I believe then that the *object*, far more than the *subject*, of our preaching determines the natural order of our discourse. If our object is to convince, we must naturally seek the most regular order of advancing proofs; if to impress, we must follow the course of human feelings. Should we wish to make comparisons, we must enumerate all the points of agreement. Would we narrate, our clue then is the succession of events. Thus then, as it appears to me, each has its peculiarity, and the only *art* is to get at the true *nature* of the matter in hand.

But then there is the application? Yes, my good reader, I was for some time rather at variance with my people on this subject. *They* would have an elaborate separate application, and *I* gave nothing but either an affectionate address at the conclusion, or between whiles I spoke a suitable word, when I thought it was the right place. However, when I saw that the very same thing

made far more impression if spoken at the end than in the middle, where I could do it I gave in more to the taste of my people; although I could never quite approve of this taste, or rather this habit of letting themselves be edified in this way and in no other. It is certainly natural that the impression made by a serious discourse should be stronger toward the end; that it should then come with more force to its object, and reach it if possible; but when a separate application is required, to say "This concerns *you*," it is my opinion that the congregation is either too cold under our sermon, or our sermon is too cold for the congregation.

And now at last, beside *truth* and *order*, the golden *simplicity*, which, beyond all, knows how to find the shortest, the purest, the clearest expression, which can smooth down the sharp lines of art and discovers beauty of language in the nature of the subject,—simplicity which speaks the very language of the hearers, but that language purified,—gives their own ideas, but these ideas dignified. No, the labour we have bestowed on it shall make our *elaborate* discourses no less useful than the others; nay, on the contrary, more useful, as this labour brings us nearer to our people, instead of setting us at a greater distance.

But I must not digress any longer. I have let myself be carried further away by a favourite subject than may prove agreeable to some of my readers. I will then only add, that I have merely been desirous to give the result of my own reflection and experience, and not to impose my ideas as a law on others. They have for me this advantage, that subjects, ideas, words, grow up now on all

sides about me like bright poppies in the wilderness; that art no longer puts zeal into armour, but offers it a friendly hand; that I need not pass by any flower or fruit which grows on the way of my discourse; and that my Mastland congregation is in some degree more awake than it was three years ago.

I am sometimes, I own, a little out of spirits as to the fruits of my preaching, when I find the people on Monday just the same as they were on Saturday; but I have learned to see that there lies a little youthful presumption in our first expectation of the fruit of our preaching. Is it not as if we were to do all at once what another could not do in several long years? And when we look into ourselves, have *we* got rid of our follies and our sins in so very short a time? Moreover, may not the best fruits ripen in secret? Oh! if each time we could remove but *one* bad thought, change *one* evil act, wipe away *one* sad tear, awaken reflection for *one* moment, either excite or compose *one* pang of remorse—how abundant, and great, and noble, would our harvest then be at the coming of Christ!

VI.

THE BURGOMASTER'S COCK.

"DON'T you know it? The whole village is full of it."

"What? What is it?"

"There is a cock dead—actually murdered."

"No! What is all that?"

"What is it? Well, 'tis the Burgomaster's cock."

"Our Burgomaster's magnificent cock! He that used to move so stately along the street, his jet-black body swelling at every step, his breast puffed out, his large white topping aloft; as respectable as fifty years ago the fairest, well-powdered periwig towered above a black dress-coat."

It is my opinion there is in the cock something of the serious, suspicious, vindictive character of the Turk; only that he makes no shut-up harem of the poultry-yard, and has no eunuchs to guard it; but not a whit the less jealous does he move about at the head of his troop of wives.

But it was not alone the general cock-nature that inspired the deceased. It is as if the insolence of us men infected our domestic animals, while we cannot make them partake of our humility, wisdom, or generosity. Thus the horse neighs and bounds in his bright harness, the dog lets the ragged beggar see or feel the strength of

his teeth. In like manner our cock strutted along as the Burgomaster of the cocks of Mastland, and no common peasant-cock came with impunity into his vicinity, if he did not instantly get humbly out of his way. This, by the way, gave occasion to more than one serious battle; for cocks and mighty sovereigns do not willingly recognize any right but that of the strongest.

But beside his own species, our cock had to contend with other enemies. The village-school, as has been already stated, lay at one end of the street. Accordingly most of the children had to go along the street and pass by the Burgomaster's. It was then a great annoyance to this dignified cock to have these wanton skipping urchins trotting along close by the house and garden without any show of respect and reverence. But when these insolent brats threw pebbles instead of crumbs of bread to him and his hens, or drove them back within the limits of their own walk, his comb glowed with indignation. But as he could not venture to face the whole party, he retired with short unwilling steps and a menacing cluck. But woe to the little fellow who, guilty or innocent, separated from the main body and came too near him! He had more than once flown at the face of such a little straggler, to the imminent peril of his eyes or nose. The mothers should long since have taken up the matter, but they pacified the terrified and bawling child with some sweeties or with a box on the ear, for—it was the Burgomaster's cock.

So far for what was most worthy of notice respecting the murdered party; we must now say something about the murderer.

At a distance of better than half an hour's walk out of the village proper, but still within its jurisdiction, civil and religious, lies a hamlet named the Hokkendam. Lofty and stately elms and ashes raise there their foliage, and fertile arable and pasture lands extend in all directions; so that, at the sight of such prodigality of nature, the traveller is struck with surprise that the wretched abodes of the inhabitants should present such a contrast. They are for the most part mere cabins, that can hardly resist a heavy fall of rain or a strong gust of wind. The doors hang loose and drag along the ground; of the panes of glass in general only some bits remain, and on the rotten reed-thatch, moss and grass and house-leek grow luxuriantly, while in some cases the roofs themselves no longer extend over the half-fallen-in barns. Some of the houses are, no doubt, though not much better built, kept in better condition; and they maintain, not without difficulty, their rank, by acting as alehouses or as shops, or by a couple of cows, which pass the winter in them. We are therefore the more surprised at finding in the middle of this hamlet a gaudily painted paling, a formal but neat and well-kept flower-garden, and behind it a handsome farm-house, on which shines a bright brass-plate—the dwelling of Arij Ploegstaart (*Plough-tail*).

Arij Ploegstaart is a man in the full vigour of life, strong and muscular of body, and—what is rather unusual in his class—cheerful and lively in temper and in looks. In his early years a mere day-labourer, he was enabled by his industry gradually to set up for himself; in which he was aided by an inheritance, ra-

ther large for one in his rank, which fell to him. Since that time, failure of crops and sickness of cattle seem to have passed him by; and thus, by the high prices of both one and the other, his property has increased in proportion to the decrease of that of others. He is now one of the largest landowners, and bears with reason the title of King of the Hokkendam; not only because he is the only rich man among so many poor, but because he gives employment to nearly the whole population, on his land in summer, and in the winter in the flax-barn or the threshing-floor, and thus exercises an unlimited authority over them. With respect to Mastland, he behaves to it as a nearly independent colony does to the mother-country. Nominally he acknowledges the authority of the village magistracy, of which he will not become a member, but in fact he does what he likes. Fortunately for the hamlet and for the pastor, he is a regular attendant at church, and is very glad to be on friendly terms with the minister.

Visits and various kinds of business had for a long time prevented me from paying, according to promise, a visit to this important member of my congregation, in company with my wife. At length we set out. It was a lovely day, in the beginning of September; the hottest part of the day was over, and the view of the fields, which were covered with a fine harvest or had lately been stripped of it, was calculated to make our excursion an agreeable one. Here they were cutting down the summer sheaf or pulling the latest flax; there they were ploughing the land or sowing the winter crop, while the cattle were enjoying themselves in a superabundance of

grass, and here and there a horse was galloping or rolling himself in the pasture after his day's work. In a very pleasant frame of mind came we to the Hokkendam. At the sight of the cabins of this hamlet, I felt grieved that the institutions of human society should transfer wealth from the land, to which it of right belonged, to the coffers of the rich. But just at that moment the tops of the chimneys of Arij Ploegstaart's house met my eye, and immediately after pale and garden and dwelling.

Ploegstaart himself was standing out before the house, with a short pipe in his mouth and wooden shoes on, clad altogether like a working-man; only a cap of a somewhat newer fashion and better material, besides his loud tone of voice and something well-to-do in his whole appearance, distinguished him from his work-people, to whom he was in the act of giving some orders. He saw us very plainly, but went on without noticing us, and as we were approaching he had no need to come to meet us. His welcome commenced with a scolding for our not having come sooner; for this seems to be a part of the old country manners, and one of the most disagreeable. This lasted while we were going round the house past the front-door, along the clean lane, to get at the back-door. When we were within, we had to listen to the self-same scolding from his wife; we replied again and again, making excuses, and reached at last the circle of wife and children, into which, soon after, maid and man and labourer pushed their seats; for Ploegstaart looked on sitting apart from his people as a piece of that aping the ways of the town which was the ruin of the farming

class. I must confess that the wide domestic circle had in it something patriarchal; but I found it a great impediment to conversation to have at least half-a-dozen children and servants gaping and staring at you, who did not understand a single word, but who listened all the more earnestly.

There was something good-natured in the manner of the man of the house, even when he was scolding, which prevented your taking it ill of him. But with this good-nature he displayed a certain intentional clownishness, which might be ascribed to his original condition, but which he rather sought to retain than to remove. Though he probably had never heard the phrase, and certainly had never understocd it, he prided himself on a certain *grata negligentia*, which in reality was comic rather than disagreeable. As we were coming in, he pushed my wife into the arms of his dame, so that the greeting was of rather a rough nature, then wiped the table with a cloth, next took a couple of the young ones by the shoulder to make room for us; of course, a pipe was then offered me, with the query of whether, like most Dominies, I smoked out of my own box, and—so we settled down quietly at last.

Our entertainment was good, the conversation animated. With all the rusticity of his language and manners, Ploegstaart gave indications of mind and of sense. He never concealed the humbleness of his origin, but on the contrary took the first opportunity of telling it, and praising the goodness of God which had brought him thus far. He then of himself led the conversation to spiritual subjects, and in so doing showed a more than

ordinary acquaintance with Scripture, and even an enlightened mind. He afterwards spoke in praise of the quiet independence he enjoyed, beyond or out of which his wishes never extended. As the reader can very well conceive, on this first visit my part was that of laughing and nodding, rather than of talking, which I found not unpleasant.

His wife seemed to be a friendly, good kind of woman; but besides that women in the country always sit rather uneasily at the first interview, Dame Ploegstaart appeared, by a tacit agreement, to leave the affair of conversation entirely to her husband, while on the other hand she poured out the coffee, and cut and buttered the bread all the more zealously.

My wife had, for this reason, been getting nearer and nearer to our side of the room; and when we at last, having declined the offer of a vehicle, had set out homewards, with a glorious moon, we were hardly beyond the green paling when she burst out with, "Well, William, that is an odd farmer! We have nothing like him in the village. That is a man out of a book—farmer all over, and yet so sensible and intelligent! I think we shall make more than one excursion to the Hokkendam."

"It is possible we may, Keetye, but we do not rightly know the man yet."

"Well, it seems to me that we know him tolerably well. He is at least humble and cordial, and, as far as it appears, religious too."

"His humility is precisely what I am most in doubt of. It is very right that a man should not be ashamed of his inferior origin and manners; but he may also be

proud of them. It would be a real wonder if one who, by talent and industry, rose so high, and who is so independent, and has such power in his place, were really humble. And as for his cordiality, I have very seldom found sincere, trustworthy friends among those who appear to be such the first morning or evening you meet them. Lap-dogs are friends with every one, while the grave mastiff, the snarling pug, and the jealous bull-dog would die for their master."

"Come, come, you are a suspicious man, and are always looking for freckles and pock-marks even in the handsomest face. For my part, I shall be very glad to pay another visit soon to the odd farmer."

"Yes, but now suppose that these oddities are displayed to every new-comer? I have known professors who used the very same witty expressions to every stranger; they were the chimney-ornaments of their parlour, you saw them again at every visit. But for all that, Cornelia, if his good-nature and his piety are sincere, he will be an acquisition to our limited circle, even though he should prove to be no *man out of a book*. And I am rather of opinion that it will be so."

But 'tis time we should return to the cock. We have almost forgotten the poor animal.

The leaves had already fallen from the trees, and were covered for the first time with a thin coat of snow. It was Saturday morning, and the school had broken up. Arij Ploegstaart's children went to the school all through the winter, for there was a good path of sand to the village; and the youngest were led thither and protected by the eldest—as children lead and protect. However,

they always got back to the Hokkendam with a whole skin, though not always with whole or clean clothes.

There stood Master Balyon at the top of the street, near the school-door, and settled the quarrels about the property in the little wooden shoes, and pulled one cap and another straight, and stopped some of the jumpers in their wild career. He advanced with the last girl as far as the middle of the street, followed with the fire of his eye the scholastic youth till they were at the Burgomaster's house, made a bow toward mine, and turned round—all as he had done for the last thirty years, in the summer with his hands behind his back, in the winter with his right-hand in his breast, and the left in his breeches-pocket.

No school from Saturday till Monday morning! This prospect made the children, as it did every week. some inches taller, and made them jump some paces further right and left; for the way straight on is for children the march of a regiment under punishment. They straggled, and then crowded again on one another; and chancing to get a buck-goat in their eye, they trotted past the Burgomaster's at a quicker pace than usual. All at once the main body was recalled by a cry of distress. The little ones had not been able to keep up with the quick march, and the terrible cock had seized the opportunity to avenge all the injuries of the week on the loiterers. Little Arij Ploegstaart, a child of six years, had attempted to run from the assailant, but happening to slip in the wet snow, he was lying on his back under the claws and bill of the general enemy, bellowing might and main. Relief came soon, and the little fellow got off without

any dangerous wounds. He brought home, however, dirt and blood, and tears enough to cause him to give an account of what had happened. The elder ones would rather have kept it all to themselves, and their calculation was not unfounded. Arij was his father's namesake and pet, and so he had hardly told his tale, sobbing and trembling, when the reception the others met with was that the father took one by the ear, another by the neck, and a third by the cap, and pitched them over the threshold into the house, sending after them some bastard-curses—for he never used any other; but he did not like to be quite unprovided.

But these paternal proceedings did not by any means content Ploegstaart, more especially as that very evening the child was attacked by a smart fever, which it seemed but reasonable to ascribe to terror, injury, and fatigue. The fever and the terror soon left the child, but vengeance remained in the bosom of the father. The insolent enemy of his progeny still strutted with his peacock-step along the streets of Mastland free and unpunished. Besides this our countryman bore no very good will to the Burgomaster, for they were both too independent not to be sometimes in each other's way. He had also cunning enough, under his outward demonstration of easy openheartedness, to wait for some weeks, and in the meanwhile be on the look-out for a good opportunity for executing the plan he had in his mind.

It was on a market-day, when a great many of the people were away, and the Burgomaster also had yoked his sledge, to drive with his wife over the deep snow to the town, that Ploegstaart, before he also left home, set

a couple of smart little rogues from the dike at work. The assassins, armed with a stick and a couple of nooses, stole on to the village, and managed unobserved to get by a back way into the Burgomaster's garden. The cock, as was to be expected, stood up stoutly in the defence of his territory. But while he was flying at the one, the other caught him nimbly by the wings, threw the one noose over his head, and fastened his feet together with the other, and the gallant warrior was strangled, giving his last cry.

All this was the work of a few moments, in a retired place, and was not seen by any one. In like manner they succeeded in hanging the cock to a nail in the wall of the house, and fixing a paper over him on which was to be read in large letters: STREET-NUISANCE.

The day came to a close, the night passed away undisturbed, but the next morning—oh, that morning!

The Burgomaster had come home late in the evening, and the day had been most opportune for the maid to do a little courting at the other side of the house. The night had covered everything with her veil, which conceals so much of what is bad; in the morning just at eight o'clock—for Master Herman Balyon is a punctual man—the bell began to ring, and at the first stroke the Burgomaster leisurely put the silver-cover on his pipe, set his nightcap straight, and then took up the bowl of barley, just as if nothing had happened. But when he went out, he looked first up at the sky, and then at his poultry, and called and shook the bowl, and called again, and yet he could only see hens; and he went round the house,—and all at once he flung the bowl down on the

ground, broke his pipe, stumbled over his slippers, and tumbled into the house quite breathless, and sank down into his armchair, while the blood seemed ready to burst out of his nose and ears.

The Burgomaster's wife, equally alert on her side, had, as soon as the bell began to ring, got the tea ready; and when it ended she was cutting the bread-and-butter. Little used as she was to let herself be put out of her way, in the quiet course of her domestic labours, she stopped for a moment with the knife motionless in her right-hand and the bread in her left, fixed her steady eye on her beloved spouse, and asked with deathlike composure, "Is anything the matter?"

This question saved our worthy Van-den-Zanden from a fit of apoplexy; for from the contrast of this calm language with his violent mental agitation, it was as if the dam of horror which kept in his feelings was burst. His compressed lips opened, though still trembling with rage. The usual terrestrial terms would not satisfy him, so he cursed heaven and hell together. This was not an every-day event for his wife; she never looked for it except at one or two annual meetings, where they used to drink more than usual; and as the cursing language is very vigorous, and as well-sounding as it is intelligible, she quietly resumed her bread-and-butter cutting, in expectation of more accurate information. But just at that moment, unluckily for herself but luckily for the Burgomaster's sanguine constitution, in came the maid, who really was somewhat to blame though she knew nothing about it; and, with the most select terms of abuse, she was ordered to go up and pack her box and go about her

business, without her being able rightly to make out by what dreadful deed she had deserved it. Then came in the beadle, a poor man, with a large family, wholly depending on the Burgomaster, to receive his orders as usual; and this good soul wriggled like an eel at the unwonted reception he met with, and bowed lower and lower at every term of abuse.

Now at last the Burgomaster had relieved his mind sufficiently to be able to let his usual three cuts of bread-and-butter and three cups of tea go down his throat along the stream of his words. He then looked for his spectacles, and got into another fit of anger at the sight of the *corpus delicti*, which made him storm a little more at a couple of his poor neighbours, who had seen nothing when they should have seen everything.

Meanwhile friends and neighbours began gradually to form groups in the street. Those whose backs were to the Burgomaster's house, or who were at a distance, were laughing; the rest treated the matter seriously. Some mothers could hardly keep from expressing their joy aloud, and the old orators of the place declared themselves against all street-nuisances, including the murdered cock and his assassins. But what every one wanted to learn from his neighbour, was precisely what no one knew; and though all that day every kind of work was lengthened out, much potatoes were boiled to mash, and many a pot of porridge was burnt, when the evening came they were all thinking who *would* have done the deed, but no one who *did* do it.

When I heard of the matter I stayed quietly at home all that day, and the following days spoke as little about

it as possible; but meanwhile I got all the information that was to be had at second-hand, chiefly through my trusty *aide-de-camp,* Master Balyon.

Sunday arrived, and no one was a whit the wiser. The church was fuller than usual, even the regular sleepers had their ears cocked; but at the end of the service hardly any one was satisfied, for I had let the dead cock rest, and merely preached the Gospel.

On Monday morning as the Burgomaster was sitting at breakfast with the fatal paper in his hand, he jumped up so suddenly that his wife quietly drew on one side, in order to give him free way in all directions. With the words "I should have thought of that before," and the sentence of death in his hand, he ran quickly up the street and into the school-house. Herman Balyon had got his nightcap on again, after ringing the bell, in order to enjoy it as long as possible, and was sitting in the schoolroom mending pens; for he never did any school-business in his private house. At the sudden arrival of the Burgomaster his agitation made him split a pen all the way up, instead of making a mere slit in it, and he took off his nightcap.

"Master, make haste and look over all your copy-books! and, as that is not enough, all the hand-writings in the town-house; I must know who has written this. Do you hear?"

Master Balyon did hear, and he made a bow, and with the bow he undertook the critical task. When there was nothing more said about the cock, the Burgomaster's tone became more friendly, and the two village dignitaries walked together across the churchyard. I saw it

from my bedroom, where I was just getting up, and I drew from it a good omen for the tranquillity of the ensuing week.

This Monday was a day of unusual exertion for Balyon; against evening he had gotten many authentic papers out of the town-house, and he came to me to look after some church documents. That night he burned two *extra* candles, and still he did not yet discover it; and that for a very simple reason, which had never occurred to the Burgomaster.

Pale with want of rest he called before half-past nine on Tuesday morning at the Burgomaster's. During a whole hour, even when he was ringing the bell, he had been thinking in what terms he should make his cheerless report; but his whole harangue was cut short by the demand:

"Well, whose hand is it?"

"I . . . I don't know."

"You are a mere dreamer, I tell you."

"But . . . but if the Burgomaster would please to recollect that the letters on this paper are print-letters; and that takes away all peculiarity."

The sight of the fatal paper threw his Worship into a new rage, and with a menacing eye he roared out "Print-letters! ay, I'll pay you with print-letters, you blockhead!"

This sounded like a clap of thunder in the ears of the worthy schoolmaster, who was expecting an admonition on account of some dues that he was in arrears for; but he saw that the best way was to get out of the rain, and he withdrew.

A dreamer! ay, he was still half in a dream after his sleepless night and his fruitless mental agitation. It chanced to be writing-morning in the school, and the children were then doing nothing. But when the pens were scratching away, Master Balyon fell into a doze, and he dreamed of writings and signatures, which danced in and out in wild confusion; after which some print-letters rose up out of the ground which grew larger and larger, till all at once all the writing was blotted out by a stream of cock's blood, and the honest man awoke in terror, and wiped the clammy sweat from his brow.

In the meantime the Burgomaster, who in his ordinary state of mind was by no means unreasonable, began to perceive that neither the Master, the beadle, nor the neighbours were at all to blame, and the affair thus came to a tranquil *status quo*, which in people of this restless nature is the usual substitute for peace and quiet. This *status quo* would probably have been prolonged indefinitely, and Time then, which has caused so much evil to be forgotten, would have soon put up this dead cock also in his huge cloakbag; but . . .

It is granted to few to keep to themselves any act, good or handsome or even remarkable, that they have performed. It whirls about in their memory, it looks out at their eyes, it burns on their tongue, and at last steps out unobserved between their teeth. For there is no word that weighs heavier on the underlip than *I;* it requires great strength of muscle to keep it in, and if it once escapes, what a number of words does it draw after it!

Job Wijsland is a respectable shopkeeper in our village, quiet by nature, good-natured, cheerful, and, though

he can converse pretty well, has the happy gift of listening attentively to any one who is fond of talking. This makes him be much liked, and, joined with his well-known honesty, is of great service to his shop.

Honest Job was always welcome at Ploegstaart's as well as elsewhere; so just at the time of New Year, according to wont, he stepped over to the Hokkendam, to settle his account with him and have a chat at the warm fireside. He found our friend at home, all alone, for his wife and children were, as he said, at grandmother's. Ploegstaart flung a great log of wood on the fire, and drew a can of his best beer. They chatted long and pleasantly; Job spoke—as he could do it here in safety—of the droll rage of the Burgomaster. Arij dropped an odd word, and, after they had had a good laugh, laid his hand on Wijsland's mouth.

Reader, do you know any one that can be silent—silent as the grave? Give him the hand and select him for your friend. But is he trusted, and can he still do so, can he do it in reality? Oh! then grapple him to your heart and make him your bosom-friend.

Job Wijsland was no babbler, and Ploegstaart therefore reckoned that there was no one to whom he could entrust his secret with more safety. But Job had a wife who had an utter aversion to secrecy, either in herself or in any one else. Somewhat squint-eyed, somewhat lame, somewhat crook-backed, she had none of her members entirely at her command but her tongue and her ears. In her shop sermons were criticized and religious harangues were delivered; news there chipped the shell, or grew amazingly in a few minutes; what was bad was

there placed under the microscope, and schemes were devised, which people gradually produced as their own conceptions. In a word the talk of Mrs. Wijsland did the shop no less good than the silence of her husband.

What thousands of words had been exchanged over the narrow counter, since the first half-ounce of coffee was bought on that unhappy morning! And yet—how vexatious!—Mrs. Wijsland had nothing to say about the cock, beyond declaiming against the wanton and godless generation nowadays, and that envy which will not leave even the worthiest people at rest:—the Burgomaster was a good customer.

That very evening and the following day, as there were strangers in the place, and so the old news was become new, Dame Wijsland talked a good deal about the cock and the worthy Burgomaster. Job held his tongue. Now this was noways an unusual thing with him; but he held his tongue when the same subject came up again, and his wife was all astray with her guesses and her conjectures:—he held his tongue, I say, but he smiled. That smile appeared suspicious to Dame Wijsland; she sounded him, she menaced, and—before she went to sleep she was convinced that he knew something. She woke early, and began to consider where her husband had been for the last few days, and whom he could have spoken with. All of a sudden the long-forgotten event of the terrified and injured child flashed on her mind, along with the ramble to the Hokkendam. She now brought her heavy guns to bear on her husband, ventured on a bold guess, and vowed she would be silent—be silent were she even to burst! Enough, Job Wijsland literally did not violate

his secrecy, and yet his wife knew all about it. *He* never uttered it, but *she* did, and he never contradicted her.

On the following Sunday Mrs. Wijsland invited the miller's wife and sister. The women could never rightly agree together; but the men were cousins and friends, and dealt with each other, and thus, as we say, the women were friends too. It was evening; the party sat together. They drank coffee—that speaks of itself. They ate bread-and-butter with hung beef and biscuits with sugar—so does this. It is then quite evident that the sermons of that day were first discussed, and then the news of the last week was brought forth from all quarters.

I have frequently observed that whenever people who have no great liking for one another are met in a friendly way, the gall that they bear each other is by so much the more copiously poured out on others. On this occasion, as the three cousins were very much interested in and eloquent on the affairs of the church and of their neighbours, the afternoon sermon was pronounced to have been very so-so; and when that was settled, the girls of the village were paraded, if any of them had worn clothes unsuited to her, or gave promise of untimely fruit. There was in fact little news. So to fill up one of the painful intervals, and to stir up in some sort the fire of the conversation, the miller's wife resuscitated once more the dead cock. The countenance of Mrs. Wijsland assumed a serious air; she took snuff, but still she kept her secret. She only said, "She should indeed . . . but people must not say everything;—they are looking in the village for what might be found in the country;—the poor were often accused, because people were afraid to accuse the

rich;—but it was better not to say too much about these things, that people's quiet might not be disturbed . . ."

Before next Sunday the whole village, the Burgomaster included, knew on whose conscience the blood of the cock lay,—but no one had said it. I too knew it. It therefore did not surprise me that Arij Ploegstaart was—some good old pious souls excepted—my only attentive auditor, who in consequence did not observe the flashing eye of the Burgomaster which was fixed on him from time to time, and that he turned angrily away when Ploegstaart saluted him as he was going out of church.

The bomb was now to burst. Ploegstaart was in the common-hall, had lighted his short pipe, and given orders to put to his horse, and was considering whether he might not have mistaken the look of the Burgomaster, when the beadle, bowing and trembling, came to ask him to step over to the Burgomaster's.

Ploegstaart was prepared for everything, so he set out, in the full consciousness of his independence, just as he was, in his wooden shoes and smoking. He went in with little ceremony, and, without waiting for a seat to be offered him, he took a chair and sat down.

"Now I know it; *you* have killed my cock."

These words were directed at him rapidly and incoherently, in a voice trembling with anger. The man could not utter a word more.

"Is that all?" was the reply. "That is *your* affair; but *I* know that he was near picking my child's eyes out, and caused him a fit of sickness; that was *my* affair."

With these words Arij got up, quietly put his chair away, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and went off.

He then had his horse put to and drove off, as tranquil as if nothing had happened, indeed rather pleased that his secret was one no longer. Still he was cautious enough to keep his laughing to himself, and not to say anything when the cock was spoken of, which was of course now again the case every day.

But now for the consequences!

The first was that Ploegstaart came to an open breach with his betrayer. He no longer sent his corn to be ground at the village miller's, and he gave all his custom to Joachim Wijsland, who a little before had, out of pure brotherly love, opened a shop of the same kind as Job's.

But the Burgomaster? Well, after mature reflection he saw there was little more to be done in the matter, as the actual murderers still kept out of the way, and the guilty party had confessed nothing, while the proofs were hard to come at. He was also rather ashamed to commence a suit-at-law for the sake of a cock. There could therefore no *direct* penalty be inflicted; but, my dear readers! in little places where direct and legal penalties are too troublesome, too difficult, and too costly to come at, people are able to avail themselves of *indirect* and secret penalties, which go just as straight to the mark, and even inflict a deeper wound.

In February the taxes of the village were assessed,—that Pandora's box in a small community! The Burgomaster was now able to arrange it so that the guilty party should be rated higher than usual.

When Arij Ploegstaart received the tax-account he at first dashed it to the ground, but he then laughed, and taking it up put on the back of it—again in print-letters!—

	Fl.
Annual rates	80
Additional, a black cock with a white topping . . .	20
	Fl. 100

He then returned the account and paid the hundred *gulden.* New rage, new cause of quarrel!

"But is it not now full time that you as a minister of the Gospel of love and the pastor of the flock should interfere?"

Yes, good readers, it is, and I will honestly confess that it is to me the most difficult thing in the world to give admonitions and corrections to people individually, with whatever ease and boldness I may do it from the pulpit. It proceeds, I believe, less from fear of man than from the dread of falling into a magisterial bitter tone, and, in addition to this, from a certain desire, which is not at all times wise or to be approved of, of being friends with every one. I often set out with the most ardent intentions, but, as I go along, the admonition or the reproof sticks in my throat so fast that it almost chokes me; if I open my mouth, it then cleaves to my tongue and palate, and all the power and spirit vanish. Then the people say, "What a good man our Dominie is!" But when I get home, and think of how I have acted, I cry, "O thou of little faith! where is thy zeal, where is thy courage?"

Still I *did* try to restore the broken peace of the village. But every one whom I called on had so many reasons why he could not *just now* keep the peace; no one had himself given the first occasion; every one was heartily sorry for it; they did not take it ill of me; 'twas a pity, but

there was no help for it now: and thus every time I came home just as I had set out.

My only hope now lay in the effect of time, though in a small place the stream of time does not so speedily smooth down asperities, because there is less fluctuation, less vicissitude. Notwithstanding all this, however, everything passed away silently and finally. All parties are reconciled. Arij Ploegstaart deals again with both the miller and the shopkeeper, and Dame Wijsland no longer regards him as being such a godless scoffer. Nay, I saw with my own eyes last week the Burgomaster shaking hands with him. Can you now suppose that the people of Mastland do not know how to forgive and forget?

I must, however, set down some little bye-circumstances. The getting corn ground out of the village is amazingly inconvenient and costly; Joachim Wijsland's goods are dearer and not so good as Job's, and Van-den-Zanden wants a piece of pasture-land which belongs to Ploegstaart.

O thou reconciliation of this world, what art thou? Self-interest opens the door again to let the adversary in, but in every corner of the room the eyes of aversion are still glaring!

Gospel of grace and love and felicity! Everyone prizes thee, and takes thy words upon his lips; but when it comes to acts of self-denial and generosity, if thou art to struggle against anger and bitterness—ah! a dead hen has more influence than thou over the selfsame man.

VII.

WINTER IN THE COUNTRY.*

I WAS one time sitting in Amsterdam in the house of my future father-in-law. It was the afternoon, and in the two last months of the year, that is usually as much as to say it was twilight. We gazed, both of us, on the whirling flakes of snow, which mingled with each other in a thousand forms and circles, but which still descended imperceptibly and gently melted away, and were again succeeded by others—the striking image of the dreams of our fancy, formed in the air and dissolved in the mire!

We too abandoned ourselves to those delicious dreams, the innocent recreation of love. But when we had built for ourselves in the air a village and a manse, and what not else, my dear girl suddenly started a very prosaic but, between ourselves, a genuine Amsterdam idea. "Ah, it's all very delightful, William, but then the winter in the country, oh that must be dreadfully long!"

"Be long! long to *us*, Kee?" Now, reader, supposing you not to be a frigid old bachelor, you must be aware how this conversation ended.

But in sober truth a winter in the country is, to an Amsterdammer, a dreadful idea. Whenever by chance

* *De winter buiten*, that is, 'The winter without'—sc. of the town or city.

he issues from the gate, wrapped up in a warm great-coat, and he sees the fields covered with snow, and the ditches and pools frozen over, and when he then discerns out of the midst of that realm of death a little village elevating its white roofs, or the smoke ascending from a solitary dwelling-house, a feeling comes over him similar to what we conceive to be in a Russian who is menaced with banishment to Siberia.

This then is the case. Let him who looks for nothing but verdure in the country, get into town as fast as he can on the first of November, to live and enjoy warmth and society in the thick piled heaps of stones there, as the bees do in their densely populated hives. Indeed I really believe—though she never said a word to me about it—that my dear helpmate did feel some slight agitation when the first autumnal storms ravaged our garden, and the yellow leaves covered the paths and the gossamers, and the dripping branches of the trees made them nearly impassable. I really could not blame her; on the contrary, I rather wondered at the strength of mind with which she suppressed all complaints and kept down every sigh. It was not however the ordinary winter in the country, the terror of the citizen, that awaited us; it was an immoderate winter, with all its evils by land and by water; it was not an exile, it was imprisonment.

During the winter the fields everywhere are lifeless and the trees are bare; but where a diligence is constantly rolling along the street, where footpaths connect town and village, one feels himself an inhabitant of the busy world, and villages are merely the outposts of the towns. But about our islands the rivers whirl their foaming

waters or pile their cracking masses of ice, and separate him who brings no excessive haste, no determined mind, and no robust body to the ferry from the other side, where perhaps warm-hearted friends or relations longingly await him. Then the roads—it is downright mockery to call them so now; the naked heath has a better right to bear that name. Fancy now, reader, a long, far-extending pool of mud, which can absorb no more water; a line of clay, kneaded by hundreds of horses' feet and wagon-wheels, and in which the track of the wagon is indicated by two stripes of water. Woe unto you if, ignorant and unprovided, you seek to reach the end of this long straight road! You have undertaken the task of Tantalus. You put down your foot, and you know not where it will stop at last; you wish to make a step in advance, and you have not only to raise your foremost leg but to make an effort to get it loose, and in the meantime the other selects a side way. Here your shoes or boots are pulled off, in a way the best boot-jack could not rival; then some irresistible power drags you up to your knees in the deep wagon-track. If you wish to trot, the rapid motion affects only the upper part of the body and you fall forwards; if you walk, you must stretch out your arms, not to tumble off sideways; to stand still is hard work, to rest is impossible; there is not even a tree for you to lean against. But yonder you see a countryman going along what is called a footpath; and you will make trial of it too. But alas! a footpath in the country here is a high, slippery, rounded line of clay, or a succession of broken stones tumbled together; and doubly fortunate are you if, after some ineffectual

efforts you get off it without having cut your ankles in the holes in the stones, or somewhat cooled your weary carcass in the ditch.

"But can we not ride?" inquired my wife, when after a vigorous attempt at going along in that way, or more properly a wrestling-match, she had been forced to give up.

"It won't do," drily replied the farmer, at whose house we had spent the evening,—"they are clean."

"Who are clean?"

"Why, the wagon. Neighbour Corny, is the only one that has a dirty one."

"And where are yours then, that they are clean?"

"Why, in the loft, Ma'am."

The man spoke these last words with a kind of amazement, as if he meant to say, "How can any rational being expect to find a wagon, after Hallowmas, in the under-story?" my wife however, nothing daunted at being taken for a simpleton, went on with her interrogations.

"And why then has your neighbour one of his wagons dirty, and you not?"

"I have no occasion to ship."

She was as wise as ever. What, out of a degree of shame or modesty, she forbore to ask any more about is perhaps, to most of my readers, even more obscure than it was then to my wife. I will therefore thus explain it: "Neighbour must as long as the water is open carry his threshed corn, every week, and put it aboard ship."

My wife had now a huge longing to be conveyed in the dirty wagon; but when next day she was walking at the

end of the street, and saw one of them slowly jogging along, her first longing was somewhat diminished and she was afterwards entirely cured by a short trial of one. Methinks we are sitting there still, holding fast to each other, not to go over the sides, pitched, whether we would or not, from one end of the seat to the other. Now one of the wheels sinks up to the axletree in the sludge, and makes an inclined plane of the hard seat; now it springs up again from a hard clod, and *we* spring into each other's arms; by-and-by one of the hind feet of our stout horses flings a parcel of sludge in our faces; finally one of the horses falls and breaks the traces, and we have to make a quarter of an hour's halt within five minutes of our own house. "No," said my Cornelia, as we were warming our benumbed limbs at the bright blazing fire, and at the same time wiping off the perspiration, "No, William, let him travel who will; but at Mastland it is, *East, west, at home is best.*"

The nineteenth century is beginning at last to take pity on the clay-islands, and make practicable roads through them, which, mayhap, will stretch their hand to Mastland among the rest, to bring it forth out of its covert nook and to open the door of its wintry prison. Whether it will thereby, along with freedom, comfort and polish, gain also in morals and the true enjoyment of life, I will not take on me now to determine; but of a surety one must quit a large town and an agreeable society, and take up their abode out here with us, to understand the meaning of a *winter in the country.*

Dreadful however as the remainder of the winter was expected to be, it was with us in the month of November

as with one who is expecting guests, and under the pressure of preparations for them forgets a rheumatic leg or a bad tooth. A new sphere of labour had opened for me in the last half of October. The young peasants came, after the digging out of the potatoes, and the girls after the stalling of the cattle, and occupied the catechetical benches, and cost me many a weary hour. Christmas and Newyearstide also began to menace me from afar, and the people of the village expected me to *short-evening* with them,—between ourselves an ambiguous phrase that may just as well mean *shortening of the evening* as *a short and trifling evening visit.*

And my Cornelia? Oh, with the best will in the world, she had no time to perplex herself. The supplies for the winter, which everywhere in our dear native land are productive of cares and anxieties of all kinds, are here like the victualling of a ship, that for the space of four or five months expects to see nothing but the sky above and the sea around. Fortunately the old housekeepers vied with each other in the task of instructing the new-comer; the one came to help, the other to advise,—the one to salt the meat, the other to make the sausages; while my good wife listened with a thoughtful countenance, half-terrified, half-mocking, trotted hither and thither, assented, took share in the work, and yet had not really as yet a right conception of the urgent necessity; so that every week in the first winter something came short; now it was a lemon, now a brush, now some cinnamon, and then a bottle of brandy, and so forth.

But this domestic storm in November did not fall on

the female sex alone. Ah, no! I myself had to put on my shoes and grasp my stick, and go out and select good potatoes, and bargain for a fat pig, and superintend the cutting-up of a heifer,—I, that did not know that there were two, let alone a hundred, kinds of potatoes, that had never visited a pig in his sty or seen the inside of a cow! It was certainly not owing to me that the potatoes were fit to eat, that the meat could be cut and chewed, and that our first hams had fat on them.

But when this heavy autumnal toil was over, and our household regulated for the winter, we experienced some feelings of self-satisfaction and above all of gratitude. With a smile of childlike joy and of womanly confidence on her countenance, my Cornelia led me over house and cellar and barn. She showed me the nice well-provided stores of turf and wood, and the carefully stored potatoes; she described to me the contents of all the pots in the cellar, of all the tins in the storeroom, and we warmed ourselves with the one, and feasted on the other, in the blissful prospect that they would never fail us all through the winter. Now, in the town, I had learned to pray: "*Our Father in Heaven, give us this day our daily bread!*" But that was always ready for me, I saw it at all times; every day I saw everything brought forth in abundance that was needed for the day; and fortunately the key to this abundance, the all-powerful money, had never wholly failed my worthy parents, and consequently not me either. What then is the difference between winter and summer? Do not we live on money in both? But here I saw for the first time distinctly what the bitter scourge of the winter is; not cold,

but want, but hunger, by which the cattle would die on the frozen pasture, and mankind on the denuded fields, without the ever-present care of Him who teaches the emmets to lay up their stores, and causes the bees to fill their hives; of Him, who hears even the cry of the young raven!

Meanwhile December came, the dismal dark winter month. However insufferably long this month might appear to be in other winters, it was now quite the thing; for I was delighted to find that the fogs and storms made as it were a ring-fence around me, which kept off all distraction and gave me leisure for my numerous occupations. Cornelia, too, had so many things to clear away, and then to pay so many hitherto deferred visits, that the Christmas holidays were on us before we ever thought of them. But no, I *did* think of them, and they came quite too soon for me. Oh, what labour did it cost me to struggle through the busy duties of those days! How freely did I draw my breath when, after so much toil, the wishes and prayers of New Year's Day also had been uttered! And how we welcomed, after the visits and letters, compliments and beggings of that day, the first morning when we could say to each other, "Well, this day is our own!"

It was a beautiful winter's-day. The sky was bright, and a sharp east-wind threatened frost; but cheerfully shone the sunbeams, and they were reflected from the snow-covered fields, while at every little blast of wind the trees shook snow and hoar-frost from their heads, as if they wanted already to loosen the shackles of winter. Everything cried out to us: "It is still winter, no

doubt, and the cold will pinch still harder; but the sun goes higher and higher: his beams will awaken the fields to a new life, and the gentle breath of the spring-wind will blow away the ice and snow and hoar-frost."

The very increase of the frost made the month of January cheerful and social; for it gave us the long wished-for opportunity of making visits to, and receiving them from, other villages. My neighbours were longing, as well as myself, to cool in the pure air their heads heated with work; and my Cornelia, who was so annoyed by the pools of mud and the roaring waters, stepped with a lightened heart along the frozen ground and the smooth path on the ice. Truly even the month of January had not a single day too many.

At length the almanac announced February, that uncertain month, which sometimes continues the bitter cold of its predecessor, and sometimes too gives preludes to the storms of its successor; but which always, following the old tradition, is bound to give us some summer days. On the second day of this month the old gardener of the manse was early at our paling, rang the bell, came in, and placed himself before me without uttering a word, but his countenance seemed to say: "I am required here. What am I to do?"

"Well, Ariaan, what do you want?"

"Well, Dominie, it's Candlemas Day."

"Is it? I did not know it was. But surely you don't want a wife now?"*

Ariaan thought it very improper of me to treat him

* It is not possible to preserve the humour here. The Dutch term is *Vrouwendag* ('Women's day'), and *vrouw* is 'wife' as well as 'woman.'

as a fool, as it seemed to him I did; but when he became aware that in reality I did not know what Candlemas Day is to a gardener, I sank somewhat per cent. in his estimation, and in my turn stood rather like a simpleton before him.

In short the man had come to settle my hotbeds, to lay out my kitchen-garden according to his ideas, to dig the ground, prune the trees, and consult with me about all the important operations that were to yield a whole year's supply and gratification. Oh, with what delight did I then strike a spade into the ground, as if I was going to dig the spring out from under the frozen crust! with what care and sagacity I looked out for the warmest spots to sow in them, with my own hand, the earliest seeds,—but so unskilfully, that they came up afterwards in all sorts of zigzag lines, and by far too thick; and how I measured out the small space within the frames, to be able to sow and plant everything in them that frames can produce; so many square feet of salads and purslane, and so many square inches of cresses and radishes!—Now, between ourselves, it was all very dull work for me; but with all that, Cornelia and I had never walked in our garden with so much pleasure, not even in the middle of the summer, as when a few days later in an agreeable sunshine we went along the walks or rather between the bits of wood which marked out the map of the new walks. I pointed out to her all the alterations I had found it necessary to make in the old-fashioned mode of laying out; where the flower-beds were to make a display, and the seats to await us; where the peas should bloom and the kidney-

beans wind; and soon after she came in quite delighted with the first flower in her hand, and *I* cut my first salad.—It was now no longer winter; no, it was for us no longer winter. In the showers of March we only heard its departure; for the trees which it still shook, did they not bear the leaves and flowers carefully inclosed in the buds?

Reader, we have since that period spent three more *winters in the country*, and have never even for a moment wished to change the wintry fields for the densely-packed houses, and the sleeping garden for prying opposite neighbours; and, in my opinion, four winters in a remote village are enough to dissipate all the romantic dreams about the delights of a country-life, and leave nothing but the naked reality remaining.

We will now then balance accounts, my worthy citizen, who with a compassionate smile art looking down on us, poor country-folk. With you too it is cold and gloomy, as it is with us; and against the cold we also have good fires, and in the gloomy days we enjoy at least all the light there is. But the beautiful natural scenery with which God has adorned the winter also is not seen by you in your streets and markets. Take the snow, for example. How brilliantly and how splendidly that vesture covers the fields, and that attire adorns the trees! The pastures and corn-land are clad, as it were, with a white sheet sprinkled with diamond-dust; and as the swan claps her wings, so the trees shake their branches. The snow has fallen also in the town. But it falls from the chimneys in dirty lumps, and dribbles in black water sadly from the roofs; while

a yellow coat of it covers the streets trodden down and kneaded into mud, in colour like the sand which indicates the abode of a wealthy man who is lying sick; and slowly and tediously do they clear away that porridgy substance, that stream of mud which the one good neighbour or maid strives to shovel over on the other's territory, which perhaps gets hard frozen and makes the streets dangerous, and hardly yields pure snow enough for the children to make snowballs of.

"But it is not snow or ice that makes the winter pleasant with us it is the people, the comfort, and the society."—I can easily believe that he who is accustomed to move every day among a crowd of people, and to come in contact with a great many persons, would experience something insufferably void in our rarely trodden street, and find it difficult to inure himself to seeing the same faces month after month, day after day; for the winter brings no strangers into the villages. Let him then stay where he is. But would you believe it, that that very same feeling of loneliness oppresses me whenever I, at any time, ramble through a busy populous city? I am then as if I were abandoned by every one and dwelt alone in the world, where no one knows me and no one cares for me, and do not feel at home until I see the freedom of nature around and the wide expanse of heaven above me.

Now as this tranquil country-life invites us to phisophize, we will endeavour to explain these different modes of feeling on the principles of human nature. Social life is in its origin an extension of domestic life. The pastoral tribes are those which have kept the closest

to this original state; commercial towns are the furthest removed from it, while agricultural villages are in the mean between both. Thus *we*, among whom a stranger rarely settles, all know one another; many are related or allied to each other, all have ideas and recollections in common; the civil as well as the religious authority is in the one hand; no difference of religion or mode of life sinks a deep ditch between us; in a word, we live like brothers and sisters. Perhaps *you* regard this last circumstance as an exaggeration, while *I* find the comparison to be uncommonly just; for in a large family there is always some quarrelling and fighting between brothers and sisters; there are always some dark mists on the sky of brotherly love and domestic happiness. Hence it follows that I above all, as the spiritual father of the large family, am still half at home whenever I go out, for I can distinguish every house in the dark, and recognize every voice at a distance. On the other hand, I feel myself lonesome and deserted,—like a boy going from his father's house to a boarding-school—whenever I make a visit to a city, and pass along among thousands of people, with whom I have nothing more in common than the pavement of the streets, and who ask nothing of me, nor I of them, but not to run against each other.

It is quite natural that, as the social system extends, the domestic state must decline more and more. It is no concern of the citizen what the name of his next-door neighbour is. *Fellow-citizen* in this case is little more than *fellow-creature*. Let him then who wishes, without being watched or impeded in his own way of living, to

observe mankind in their various forms and occupations, in their bustle and toil, their highest polish and their lowest degradation, go and live in the great towns. But, with us, instead of that feverish dream of life in which thousands of images float before the giddy gaze, there is calmness, quiet, time to get acquainted with God, with nature, and with mankind,—or, in fact, wherever a man has not enough of internal and external occupation, time to tire himself.

Thus then all depends on this last condition; for he that gets tired of the country will long for the enjoyments of the town. I will not altogether reject these enjoyments; I should in that case ungratefully forget or moodily condemn many happy days of my life. They are agreeable and good for him who has the requisite time and taste and money, and who enjoys them with a safe conscience. If I value them less now than formerly, it is perhaps partly because my profession denies me access to the greater part of them. But he who requires such constant intoxication, such an incessant change of scene, to fill up an insupportable void within him, has, I fear, neither his head well set on nor his heart well placed.

But one word more, which will make the scale of happiness rise awfully on our side—*conversation.* Yes, no doubt of it, I *do* envy you, who dwell among many thousands, and who, at your will select out of these thousands the souls which are akin to your own, to plan the work, to share the joy, to bear the calamities of life with them. I then recollect my college-life, when I invited to my room the youth who pleased me, without

asking, "Of what rank or condition are you?" when friendships were formed without names and relations, alone from the impulse of the heart. It appears to me as if I was seated with them at a large table, at which I could partake of everything according to my own taste, while now I must be content with the plate that is allotted me, even though I do not like the smell of it.

A city, however, is no university. How few are they who live in the enjoyment of this blessed liberty! In most cases conversation is limited to relations, and in our profession especially it is never perfectly free. This then being so, do you, my good citizen, fancy that I envy you your smoking gentlemen and your fine dressed ladies? No, I yearn not after you, you academies of social hypocrisy, you seats of universal wearisomeness.

Well, now for *my* conversation. Friends, with whom accordance in feeling and in principle has united me, have I too, partly among the neighbouring clergy, partly in my own flock. I will not, however, affect to conceal it, that here also tiresome oppressive visits are to be made; but at least I can put an end to them when I please, as I am less in bondage to the country-house clock than I should be to the town timepiece. And when choice and duty combined lead me to the fireside of plain, sensible, and truly pious members of my congregation, oh! despise not then the patriarchal farmer's fireside, despise not even the hearth and smoky lamp of the workingman! The conversation carried on there may compete with that in many a coffee-house. It is true, the development of ideas and the extension of knowledge does not proceed at the same rate among our villagers as that

of the polished citizen. But the healthy, natural understanding is no stranger here either, and if they lose some knowledge they are ignorant of much vice, and the truly honest, humble, and pious mind has an inconceivable attraction in every social circle, in every profession.

Much, however, relating to this matter will be communicated to the reader in future sketches. For the present I have attained my object, if he no more puts on such an awfully uneasy countenance when he hears anyone speak of *life in the country*.

VIII.

MY CLERICAL NEIGHBOURS.

NO, you cannot conceive it, you who hold intercourse every day with your equals, what an enjoyment it is for us village-pastors to meet one another. In our village we are in some sort like the King, who is also the only one of his kind, and seldom has a visit from a brother Majesty. The comparison may seem rather presumptuous, but is not therefore false; and, viewed from the stars, the territory of the King of the Netherlands and mine do not differ so very much.

We are alone in our circle, and to many it appears an enviable thing to attract all eyes in the church, to set in motion every head in the street, and in the houses to be placed on the softest and highest seat. In truth, I will make no secret of it, when I, while yet a child, preferred my present profession, it was perhaps more the exaltation of the pulpit, than the elevation of divine service, that had the charm for me.

Be this as it may, there comes one time or other a satiety of every enjoyment; it grows wearisome in the long run to be always looking down; marks of respect can tire us, just as *recherché* dishes often repel us. To this is to be added that in conversation we always act the part of teacher, hardly ever that of pupil, and we do

not like to be always such even among our own people. This at least is the case in our own department, so that the mind by continually producing and transmitting becomes at last exhausted and empty, and good books are requisite to fill up again the vacuity in our brains. Happy is he who thus finds in his books wise and honest friends! But this means little more—pardon the mean comparison—than as if we were to say, "Happy is he that in winter has dried or pickled beans!" fresh ones taste better. So with us intercourse with intelligent, right-minded brother-clergymen is beyond all reading; it puts life into our minds, and gives us strength for our work.

I was longing then for this intercourse also, and it was very pleasant for me that the first ordinary district-meeting gave me the opportunity of making nearer acquaintance; and thus my usual slowness in the choice of friends and acquaintances was somewhat quickened, and the choice itself rendered more easy.

The reader who knows anything of religious matters is aware that our Reformed Church is divided into classes, and each class into districts, and that each district holds regular meetings. Ours, consisting of ten ministers, meets in May and September, in a place as convenient as is possible for all of us. Thither then proceed, early in the day, the gaudily-painted vehicles which carry the grey-haired brethren, the farmers' spring-carts laden with others, driven by obliging Elders, and a few active pedestrians who live nearest to the place of rendezvous. I was there now also in person, and was welcomed as a new-comer. I thought on the proverb which my mother

had taught me when I was at her knee; *See and hear, and say nothing;* but in reality it was not possible to abide by that proverb here. With a few exceptions, we clergymen have a weak side,—I shall not pronounce myself clear of it,—which, without our being ourselves aware of it, makes us rather imprudent. We are so used to see a congregation that listens, or at least must listen, to us; and even in the private houses of many of our people we are so regarded as the teacher, that, as soon as we feel ourselves in our place of meeting, we take upon us at once to lead the conversation. This gets to be a deep-rooted custom, in fact almost a perfect necessity, like everything that flatters the pride of human nature. When several of us then get together, there appears frequently to be a contest for the lead, which makes words and ideas jostle together in a strange way. At any rate as I sat there, *seeing, hearing, and saying nothing,* the pretty little canary at my father's came into my mind, which sang so pleasingly while it was alone; but the instant that others were hung up in the same room, the notes became shriller and shriller, for they vied with one another till they reached the highest octave of bird-music.

This however did not prevent our meeting from being a kind and a cordial one. But our incipient conversation was interrupted by the stroke of the president's hammer, which opened the meeting. I shall not betray the secrets of our society, but what follows lies on my heart.

I recollect having read a great deal about the utility of these district-meetings, in certain little books of the era of the organization of our church-government. They were to be devotional meetings, and even schools of

learning. The elder Brethren were to communicate regularly the results of their experience to the younger, who were in return to make them acquainted with the progress of newer knowledge; important subjects of theology were to be treated of and criticized, difficult texts and dogmas were to be illustrated. Alas, alas! *mundus vult decipi!*

"But do you then look on the district-meetings as useless and aimless?" By no means, provided we take them for what they are, and what they can be. Only I have come into the world rather too late to be able to think that an idea is quite enough to produce something fair and good, that men are formed by directions and laws, and that rules and reports govern heart and head. I love those two days of brotherly enjoyment, and above all I love those who know how *miscere utile dulci*. But how can it be expected that men who relax twice in the year, in order to spend a day together, should bring with them a quantity of learning and piety to exchange with one another? How can any one attempt in the space of a few hours to reduce such a difference of study and mode of viewing things to harmony, when many of them never see each other except during these few hours? In truth there is abundance of true piety, sound learning, sincere friendship, to be met with in the intercourse of village-pastors; but for this the visiting of good neighbours is infinitely better suited than the few meetings, which our age of societies and companies has thought fit to institute; though I will gladly recognize and reverence the exceptions to this rule, when local and temporal circumstances permit them or produce them.

Thus was I incorporated as a brother, and I pursued my own way of making individual acquaintances. On many a Monday especially did my dear wife and I take a walk to neighbouring villages, or a drive to more distant ones. I shall not name the places, for you would hardly find them on the map, since Mastland itself is not there. I will only give you the chief results of our course of making acquaintance.

In these communications no one but yourself should occupy the first place, my never-to-be-forgotten friend Meijerburg, whose grey hairs I saw descend to the tomb with such bitter tears, and who still holds the first place in my heart. How often do Cornelia and I recall that afternoon when, after a walk of more than an hour, we entered his dwelling for the first time! Kindly did he welcome us, and his wife received us as old friends. I at once read somewhat fatherly and motherly in their faces, and they read filial reverence in mine. "Brother," said he, "as long as you remain faithful to the principles of your induction, we shall be working in one spirit, and may be of use to each other. I may perhaps be of service to you with my forty years' experience, and you will gratify me by letting me know, from time to time, what is going on in the religious world; as I can no longer read about it as I used to do; for my years are advancing, and my slender income does not permit me to buy books. But this gives me no trouble; I have retained the best of books, and have brought up my children respectably."

During this conversation a slight cloud passed over the countenance of his good old wife, and she lost no

time in interrupting it by a kind invitation to take something. Among woman's amiable qualities, though it cannot be always acquitted of vanity, is to be reckoned her readiness to hide the threadbare seams and faded portions of clothes, to endeavour to spread the bloom of comfort over the empty purse and the troubled heart; by means of which the simplest mother of a family is often able to give, with a delicate tact, another turn to the conversation, the moment it appears to be revealing the secrets of her restricted domestic means.

I was taken in a peculiar manner with my venerable neighbours from the very first. A kind of prudence, however, which sometimes degenerates into distrust, did not suffer me to surrender myself entirely to them, in the expectation that their character must have an unfavourable side also, like that of all the rest of the children of men. I never rested till I had found that dark side, and found it to be perfectly insignificant.

How often did we afterwards tread the same path, in the three years that we were neighbours! The sun daunted us not in the summer, any more than the early nightfall in the winter; nay, often did a sparkling starry sky behold us returning from the domestic fire on which, in honour of us, a bright flaming Christmas-log had been laid. If any unexpected difficulty came in my way—and where is the probationer, who has become a minister that does not meet with difficulties, in the ecclesiastical law and the poor-laws, which he has never been taught, and in his pastoral cares which could not be taught him?—if any such difficulty came in my way, a walk over to Meijerburg usually sufficed to remove every impediment.

My wife too, if she stood in need of motherly aid or advice, or that consolation which one heart pours into another, directed her steps thither, or the good old woman came over to aid her in her need.

Though our narrow circle seemed to offer little that was new, the conversation never flagged at Meijerburg's. A friendly interest makes trifles of importance. But, beside this, without having gained a name in the learned world, the old man possessed knowledge both sound and clear, and united firmness of principles with freedom of opinion. Faith in Christ lived in him, and the truth had really made him free. He therefore had not his ideas fixed in old systems, and he had no fear of novelty. Could it ever shake the firmness of his faith? And he was anxious to learn something more, even though in the evening of his life.

Alas! they will never more return, those never-to-be-forgotten evenings, passed at the social coffee and patriarchal hearth, and in still more social friendly chat.

By means of redemption of the *annus gratiæ*,* I had last year to welcome in the same house a new neighbour, a *contemporary, a college-acquaintance.* This no doubt sounded handsome. It invited me out, in order to enjoy our common recollections and to renew old acquaintance; but all recollections are not agreeable, and all acquaintance is not advantageous.

My new neighbour was but little thought of at the university. At the university however much is regarded

* In Holland when the minister of a parish dies, his family are entitled to a portion of the stipend of the following year. This is called *annus gratiæ.* In Scotland, where the same custom prevails, the term is *ann* or *annet.*

in an ill light,—a low origin, a singular or wild character, even loose principles and morals, but not want of understanding, spirit or knowledge of the world. One may sustain himself on the stage of academic society, or else he may withdraw into some retired nook, where one is secure from ridicule. Van-der-Ploeg (*of the plough*) —this name seemed to indicate a peasant origin—had more than once attempted to make some figure; but his learning was not thought learned enough, nor his humour to be at all humorous, so that he was soon laughed at as a thorough blockhead, or pitied as a poor drudge. Accordingly he fell back into obscurity, passed his examinations and exercises with sweat and tears, then roamed about for a few years as a probationer, and had now had the luck to get a fixed position.

Such then was my recollection, such my knowledge of him. Now he may have become what he formerly was not; the student's virtues are not always the virtues of society, and *vice versâ*; and finally I really knew nothing bad of Van-der-Ploeg, and we had never had a quarrel; so that on the whole I went to visit him in a friendly mood. But what was my amazement when I met him! The worthy Van-der-Ploeg, who had always gone about among us students with a stealthy eye and head cast down, like a smuggler among revenue-officers, how his appearance was altered! With a stately step, his head thrown back and his hand in his breast, he advanced to meet me. A gracious smile played round his mouth, and the words "Ha, Colleague! how are you, and how is your fair lady?" were recited rather than spoken. I could never satiate myself with viewing his portly person, more

especially when a farmer who was a member to his Kirk-session, came and joined the party. In fact everything was so solemn about him, even to the way of holding his pipe, that I must have been set down in the eye of "brother Elder" as a very insignificant sort of person indeed.

Beside this, the entering a house, whose former occupants had been my sincere friends has always given me a feeling of melancholy. I behold everything, chair and table, fireplace and clock, dishes and plates and chimney-piece just as it used to be, and all the renewing and adorning, the usual indication of a new-comer, is an annoyance to me, a desecration of all on which my eye used to repose with pleasure for the sake of the owner. It was just so with me on this occasion. While Vander-Ploeg was talking to the bowing Elder on the high dignity of his office, in such measured terms as if he was repeating a piece he had got by heart, I saw opposite me the old plush-covered arm-chair, and my worthy old friend Meijerburg sitting in it, and still heard him saying, "My son, it always grieves me to hear of the Dominie-tone or spiritual pomposity, or to observe it myself. Our mode of speaking should no doubt be more serious than that of the world, for our concerns are serious; but this seriousness should be the life of our souls, and not the paint of our countenance or the boddice of our words. It is not a whit more serious or more dignified if I say to you 'Colleague, you should smoke a little,' than if I were to speak in our usual tone and say, 'Come, neighbour, we'll now first of all fill a pipe.' I am always afraid that such a theatric tone proceeds from a haughty temper,

and that it is designed to cover the insignificance of the character and the emptiness of the mind. Taking it at the best, it is a bad habit for any one to bring home with him from the pulpit an unnatural way of speaking, instead of bringing nature to the pulpit from home and his society. A peasant may gape with wonder at the assumed solemnity, but it takes away greatly from our moral influence over right-thinking and sensible people."

Thus did I at the same time commune with the living and the dead, and I returned home after some general conversation and a promise of nearer acquaintance. I however perceived one thing or other that I cannot keep from communicating to my readers.

Among the weaknesses of my departed old friend, one was that he wished to show that though he was old he was free from prejudice. With superficial and narrow-minded people this had got him the character of a great Liberal, although, in the usual unfavourable sense of the word, he was far from being so. His mode of thinking, in reality, inclined to the old orthodox side, but he would never approve of anything simply because it was old, and still less contend against novelty with abuse and prejudice. This was quite enough to excite against him a party in his parish, which has raised its head since the Separation in our national Church. This even clouded the closing evening of his life, and made the sun of his life go down less brightly. This party had been chiefly instrumental in obtaining the calling of Van-der-Ploeg, to which others had consented, that by so doing they might, as they thought, preserve or restore peace and harmony in the parish. His trial-sermon, formed rather

after their way of thinking, was not to be found fault with, and the first acquaintance promised well; yet when the eggs had been sat on for some weeks, there came forth not nice pretty chicks but stench and rottenness; for, when rightly viewed, Van-der-Ploeg's orthodoxy was for the greater part pride: he would excel and improve on the work of his predecessor. Now when this pride struck against the pride of the godly, when they would fain lead him along the spiritual road and he would give the law to them, then they began to see that he was not the right man, and that he put nothing in place of what he put out. They hated and annoyed him more than they did his worthy predecessor. The end of it was that from that time forth he came more closely to us, instead of drawing away from us some of our waverers; and that, as he is in reality not bad at bottom, experience has made him somewhat wiser; so that this stern schoolmistress will, with the help of God, make of Van-der-Ploeg whatever can be made of him.

The remembrance of a not-to-be-forgotten friend has kept me too long in the one place. We shall then make but a short visit to my other neighbours.

At a distance of a good half-hour's walk from Mastland has resided for the last six years my worthy friend Rusters, also a contemporary and a college-acquaintance. Outspoken as a Zealander, at times rough in his language, but always noble in his views, in his transition from student to minister he has been unaltered. In society he is deficient in the delicacy of tact and high polish, in study of the curious eye and sound knowledge, which are requi-

site for shining in either; but his outspoken tone and his open eye announce uprightness and strength of conviction, and give him a moral power over his people which the high-polished and the learned fail to obtain. Such I expected him to be and such I found him, and I could therefore venture to become intimate with him at once without misgivings. Between ourselves, it is the fact, that a difference of character joined with an agreement in principles is the origin of the strongest friendship. If he canters away too hard on an idea he has taken up, I pull him back by the skirts; and if my natural coolness and caution make me hesitate too long, I am forced to give way to the power of his clear eye and a voice which he never restrains. The interests of our parishes, sometimes running into each other and in general closely connected, give us abundant materials for conversation and even for friendly argument. There is something strangely different in the way in which we conceive the same things. Mine—excuse me for saying so myself—is, frequently more judicious, always more prudent, and yet it cannot always counterbalance his "right ahead." We are like two children, the one of which is always looking anxiously before him, while the other races and plays wild and thoughtless; and yet the former often gets (to use the old saying) *into the spot where the blows are falling.*

It is on Monday mornings that I have least pleasure in visiting or being visited by my friend Rusters. And why so?—I will tell you. Should he call on me or welcome me to his house on that morning, his first question is, "How are you?" and his second, which follows immediately, "What had you yesterday?" With respect

to this last question there is really little to be done, for he instantly goes on, "I handled—" And now comes first the text, then the subject, then the outline, part for part and point for point, and I feel just as if my doctor was reading me his book of recipes. Let a man say to me, "I have handled such a history, or such a parable, or such a passage, how beautiful it is, or how pregnant it is!"—let us then take up the Bible, and examine into the force of the expressions in the original, the connection of ideas or events; but *outlines*—I can buy lots of them for a few stivers. . . . But I feel myself on the point of returning to a subject on which I have already said perhaps too much. My friend has thus, you see, his hobby and I have mine; and however beautifully accurate his outlines may be in his own eyes, his preaching of the Gospel is neither cold nor scant of matter. Well then, this very Monday, as the weather is fine, I will impose on myself the penance of paying him another visit, and listening patiently to him; and if perchance there be a trifle of self-esteem mingled with the interest he takes in the good cause, I shall overlook it and think to myself, "It is natural that a man should set a value on his plan and mode of treatment, before the industriously-wrought sermon is laid by; our wives are fond of letting a handsome service of plate or fine-wove tablecloth be seen, before they are locked up for a long time in a dark chest or cabinet."

Let us now direct our course to the opposite side of the island, and we there shall meet at a good hour's distance my venerable neighbour Marklan. After going

along a lonesome dike, under the shade of dark trees, we at length discover some cottages, a ruinous church, and then an old sombre manse. All this is very deathlike, but life soon comes into it; for our arrival sets in motion a choir of three or four dogs, to which the growling voice of a maid-servant sings the recitative. The Dominie himself is obliged to come out to silence the maid and the dogs, and they go off still growling. Now at length the garden-gate can be opened, and the worthy old Brother with his old flowered dressing-gown and black cap bids us welcome. A pair of fat old cats are driven from the cushioned chairs, and—we are seated.

"You'll drink some coffee of course, Colleague?"

"With much pleasure; walking makes one thirsty."

—Reader, if you are particularly dainty, steal an opportunity of rinsing your cup a little; old people do not see as well as they did. Then drink your coffee without any fear of its exciting or agitating quality,—*narcotic* is I believe the term employed by the learned,—such a thing is unknown here.

The old man appears perhaps not to be very conversable: the reason of that however is that all things and all men must be taken by the right handles. Only begin to speak of the news of the last Library,* or the last synod, of ecclesiastical law and regulations, or of vacancies and the cost of them,—take my word for it you'll get information here. Residing for the last forty-five years in this out-of-the-way place, he views from it quietly and regularly the whole church; just as a *rentier*, who is fond of reading travels and newspapers, feels himself quite at

* 'Boekzaal.' The name of an ecclesiastical journal.

home in China, Afghanistan, Spain and Algiers, though he has never quitted his usual residence, far less his own country.

There are other points on which my Colleague Marklan can speak, and speak well too. Do but visit him in the autumn, and merely mention some part of the winter-stock, you have wound up the clock of conversation and you need take no more trouble to keep it going. He can name to a nicety the exact market-price, and calculate even to the half-cent; and many of his counsels and remarks on domestic matters have been of essential service to me.

I must now in a few words give some further description of his character. Being himself of an equable, cheerful temper, he would fain see the whole world at peace and his entire flock at once in Heaven; he bears no ill-will to any one, unless it be to Levi the butcher, who, in spite of his vigilance, brings him now and then meat that is half an ounce light.

"That is all well and good; but what sort of a preacher is Marklan? how are his people the better of him?" Well, reader, I am rather dubious how I should answer this. The good old man is beginning to complain more and more of the coldness of his people, and they make the same complaint of him. The truth perhaps is, that both minister and people have grown cold together, and now neither can warm up the other. It is my own opinion that Marklan, after he had been five-and-twenty years edifying his people, conceived that they had got a stock of edification sufficient for the next five-and-twenty years, and that he could lead the children

along the good way in the same manner as he had led their parents. Hence arose a certain regular course, which habitual hearers could—at least from fourteen days before Christmas till fourteen days after Whitsuntide—calculate not merely after but beforehand; while during the remaining months they could guess the text and sermon, if not from the opening hymn announced on the board, at least from the exordium. On the other side however it is to be observed, that the people had not by any means yet learned all they might have learned from Marklan's sermons, which in reality were far from bad, and that, under all the circumstances they would have found it difficult to meet with a more peace-loving pastor or a sincerer friend. But familiarity causes this good side of his ministry, and the longer the more, to be disregarded.

These circumstances have given occasion to a curious sort of contention. The people would most gladly grant the worthy old man his well-merited repose, but he cannot bear to part with his people *cum annexis*. The Ruling Elders let the manse go to decay, much more than the limited funds make it necessary; but the old man finds it still very habitable. The people rarely go to church, and Marklan preaches all the more zealously. In short they are quite ready to raise the trump of praise over him in the Library, or to shed tears over his grave; but they do not long for the fifty years' jubilee that he has steadily set before him. Is death in this case also to give a peaceful end to the contest, as it has ere now terminated so many matters of dispute?—In the meantime the reader is at liberty to draw all the inferences he

pleases from this by no means uncommon case; the subject is too tender a one for me. With a smile I began to write about it,—if I pursued it any further, tears would come into my eyes.

There is still a place in my neighbourhood larger and richer than any of the rest. In it also the pastor gets a call, and within the last two years, in consequence of a new call, I have made there the acquisition of a *learned* neighbour.

Falk, the person in question, had been previously unknown to me personally, as he belonged to another university; it however gratified me that the choice fell on him, as the fame of his superior attainments had preceded him. Now I am not so very learned as to be able to stand on my own bottom as a pillar of science, though perhaps I am worked in into the edifice of our established theology, as being of a useful quality, among other stones. I therefore require some help and co-operation in order to keep up the store of learning, be it great or small, that I have acquired, to work it well and to increase it continually; and, though not quite free from self-esteem, I am still—God be thanked for it!—not too conceited to learn from others. I therefore expected to have useful and valuable intercourse with him, and exulted over it in anticipation.

We went to visit and welcome Colleague Falk. He was a short stoutish sort of a man, with a high-arched forehead and piercing eyes. His voice was strong, his words short and significant. He was by no means what people are in the habit of calling a dry bookworm; on

the contrary, he was a man burning with zeal for science, and not altogether a stranger to what was going on in the world; only there played a trait of impatience on his lips when on ordinary every-day conversation lasted too long; pretty much as if one was come to hold an important conference, and found himself prevented from it by the playing of the children of the family.

Madame Falk—for so she wished to be styled, as the wife of a doctor of divinity—Madame Falk received us in a very friendly manner. That is all I can say of our intercourse with her. Do I deceive myself? or does the sunshine bedim the moonlight? But I fancy I have remarked that learned men often have very commonplace women for wives. At all events in the case of Madame Falk the whole conversation turned on the one subject, *the Dominie;* her whole face seemed absorbed in admiration of her spouse; and in this respect she was, though in a higher position and in a more elegant manner, the very *fac-simile* of the spouse of Master Herman Balyon.

The interesting conversation of the Dominie was then to make up for the triviality of that of Madame, and it was well able to do so. With my usual caution, I had resolved on this first occasion not to be learned, but to confine myself to a simple making acquaintance. The politeness, too, due to women seemed to aid this project. But my plan was wrecked; Falk was but too happy, after some oppressive and wearisome weeks, to meet with a reading man, and was totally unused to pitch his conversation to the comprehension of his wife. She listened however, whether she understood it or not, with reverential attention, and gazed at him with unremitted admi-

ration, while Cornelia regarded the group with rather a jeering face. *Nolens volens* then I had to show my learning. We faced each other and set to—I came off very respectably.

But a man who has not spoken Latin twice for two years—a few terms of art excepted, which I have exchanged with my doctor—may well chance in the hurry of conversation to mistake a word or two; and, as no one in Mastland knows what Church-history really is, it may happen that a Father or a heretic of the first centuries should get into the wrong place. In such case it was not very pleasant for me to get a tap on the knuckles from Colleague Falk. Methought he sat there opposite me like an anxious chess-player, who has his fingers on the board the very instant his antagonist makes the slightest mistake.

Falk and I have since then frequently visited each other. I continually get information from him, and he says that he takes great pleasure in the society of his *intelligent* neighbour. And yet I cannot, even now when I am on the way to his house, help having a certain feeling, extremely like what I used to have when on my way to a professor's lecture, taking my responses with me; and—but I may deceive myself—the chairs feel softer at Ruster's.

Oh, ye men of great learning, do have some mercy! Do not lay the whole weight of your knowledge on our head! it oppresses our weak brains. And do not hold your dazzling lights before our eyes! you only blind us.

But it was not my intention to open for my readers a

portrait-gallery of my clerical neighbours; I only wanted to give them some idea of the sphere in which I move. When I look over what I have written, there steals on me a kind of fear that I may already have done too much in the eyes of some persons. The respect in which they hold our profession makes them regard it as a kind of sacrilege to raise the curtain though ever so little. Now the very reverse is the case with me. Profoundly sensible of the high dignity of our profession, I regard our defects as of so much the greater importance. Our human failings may well be known, especially to ourselves. I therefore do not repent of what I have written; I should myself . . . if I did not . . . *punctum.*

IX.

VISITING FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE.

I WELL remember, when I was a growing lad, being on a visit with a cousin of my father's, or more properly speaking, with his youngest son. The cousin was a prosperous merchant, earnest and honest, but a little loose in his notions, and anything but devout. We young ones had just fallen into one of those pauses, which are so capricious and so disagreeable, and which occur in the plays of children as well as in the drawing-room. Not to be doing nothing, we were looking out at the window. We had for some time had our eyes fixed on two gentlemen, who seemed to be always approaching and always disappearing. They were dressed in black; the one wore knee-breeches, the other trowsers; the one had a cocked hat, the other a round one, which last had a folio volume under his arm. In our childish simplicity—or let me come nearer to the truth, in our youthful wisdom—we immersed ourselves in conjectures respecting the object of those two solemn-looking personages. At length my cousin thought he had hit on the truth. That very morning he had seen two collectors of income-tax going about; so now, with the tone of one who had solved an enigma, he cried out, "Father, does the Dominie also go about furnishing accounts and collecting money?"

Cousin made no reply, but having looked in the glass he said, "Emily, you must do this business for me. I am in my counting-house, and am very busy. Do you hear?"

All this did not make the matter one whit clearer to us. On the contrary it became incomprehensible, for just a minute before Cousin had said that he had actually nothing to do.

There was a ring at the bell. Dominie M— and Mr. A— were announced. They came in and sat down, while my cousin and I made our retreat into a corner of the room, in order to take note of everything. The big book was now laid on the table and opened, and the dialogue began.

"You are still living in the same house, Madam?"

"At your service, Dominie."

"And Mr. ——'s name is . . .?"

"At your service, Dominie."

"And your eldest daughter, Jane, is she still at home?"

"I beg your pardon, Dominie, she has lately had her third child."

"Ah! I was not aware of that."

And so it went on. My cousin too was spoken of, and I began to tremble, but I stood my ground. The gentleman with the round hat took snuff.

The maids were now called in; and they sat down rather awkwardly on chairs, which they never touched at any other time, except to rub them and set them in their places. Then ensued a discourse, of which I un-

derstood nothing, and my cousin and the maids just as little. After this Dominie M— began to ask the maids if they went regularly to church, and how they thought and felt when there, and if they said their prayers constantly, etc. As they made no reply, I began to fear that my turn might come at last, so I crept along the wall, got luckily near the door without being noticed, and made my escape.

A few minutes after the gentlemen were let out; Cousin's business was all over, I came into the room again, and everything got into its usual course. All I could learn, to enlighten me on the subject, was that it was a *house-visit*.

Succeeding years made it little more intelligible to me. A vague idea of it floated before my mind as of a religious form united with something or other that bordered on confession—I knew not what. I finally ascertained that the visit was an invitation to the Lord's Supper; but I did not clearly perceive the use of this invitation, as my worthy parents used to go whether invited or not.

At the University I was troubled with none of these visits. I can, to be sure, say nothing about the house and my own room during my absence; and I was away great part of the year and of each day. I further do not recollect ever to have heard the word *house-visit* in the first years of my divinity-studies.

Toward the end of my college-course, however, I heard some talk of it among our elder students, as of an annoying custom in our Church; and some young ministers of our acquaintance lamented over the unpleasant feelings

it caused them. But all this talk was of too indefinite a nature to give me any light on the subject.

I became a minister myself; and to tell the truth, I did not as yet know clearly what I was to say on this occasion. To this was added the unpleasant recollection of the days of my childhood, so hard to be forgotten. In short I put it off as long as I could; but toward my first Easter, at which the Sacrament was to be celebrated, I found I must either be sick or perform the house-visit; there was no possible alternative.

Perhaps I should have chosen the former, and have in reality been made unwell by my mental anxiety; but luckily my friend Meijerburg was then living, and so with a heavy heart I betook me to this faithful counsellor.

"Do tell me, my best of friends, how am I to manage about this house-visiting?"

"Why, just in your own way, just as your heart dictates to you."

"But I have got no way about it, and my heart dictates nothing at all to me more than this, that I would infinitely rather stay at home."

"Well then I'll tell you. You go with your Elder from house to house, as there are no Papists in your parish; you inquire after the inmates; those who are church-members you invite to the Lord's Supper, provided they are in a proper frame of mind. For the rest, act according to circumstances. That's all."

"All! Am I then only to carry the same invitation round, from house to house and repeat it every five minutes?"

"Yes, and in doing so to look a little to what you say, that the malignancy of our times may not be able to suck any venom out of it. A general form is best in the case of those whom you do not know, or whom you suspect; and, between ourselves, it will be all the better if they do not perfectly understand you."

"Still worse. It is then not only a mere form, it is also hypocritical mummery."

"My dear friend, I must warn you against a fault, very general among right-minded young people. Do not try to do too much at first. Your first visit, if it were to do nothing else, will make the matter more familiar to you, and will bring you into closer acquaintance with your people. There is no doubt but that you will afterwards form a peculiar mode of visiting, suited to your own character and that of your people. You will then be able to do with safety what might at present be hazardous. So now God speed you! Only mind, as you have the power of choosing, to take with you a trusty and a judicious Elder."

I returned home, not more than half satisfied with my friend. I had expected more and wished for more from him, and my terror of the unusual task was not by any means quite dissipated.

On the appointed day my Elder came to fetch me. Fortunately it was one of my best members, a person of good sound judgement, minutely acquainted with the circumstances of the place, free-spoken and yet modest. With his ordinary straightforwardness he informed me

of some peculiarities that the people liked or were used to; indicated the houses where the Dominie would be invited to take tea or coffee, and marked a single house with a black coal, because former ministers had met there with an ill reception;—a most valuable precaution! in particular for me who rarely tremble *during* the danger, but by so much the more *before* it.

"You expect of course, Dominie, to get through the village in the one day?"

"Yes, if it has always been so."

"We must not then sit down anywhere till we get to Wijsland's. *He* expects us."

"Well now, let us be off."

We set out on our travels. By Meijerburg's advice I had some time before provided myself with a pocket-book,—I had still a gloomy recollection of the folio-register,—that I might put down in it the names of my parishioners and their families. This book, which I afterwards made more complete, and constantly kept by me, has often done me right good service, and for the first time on this course of visiting.

We entered the house of my next-door neighbour, a reserved, disagreeable person of whom I did not yet know whether he was my friend or my enemy. Two chairs stood ready for us, which we politely declined. It was evident that this had been expected; the offer was not made a second time. Meanwhile maid and man came in, of whom the former sat down, the latter stood like a statue. The Elder took off his hat—a friendly hint to

me to do likewise; the men of the family followed our example, the women cast down their eyes and folded their hands. My throat was choked; but luckily my eye fell on my pocket-book, and I asked all their names, though I knew them already. This unloosed my tongue, so that I was able to utter the form, which I had already repeated at least fifty times to myself. "*You know* the reason of my coming; *you are aware* that the Lord's Supper will shortly be celebrated; *we trust* that you feel the importance of that rite," etc. etc.

The master of the house replied very composedly, "I thank you, Dominie," and added immediately, "you have not fine weather for your circuit." The mistress had again raised her eyes, and went on with her work at peeling a potato; maid and man went away, doing nothing else but go away; and thus was the first house visited.

Why now, my good reader, should you accompany me any further? It is all *da capo*, and again *da capo*, from house to house.

Still there were some exceptions. In the first place there were houses which from of old had been selected as convenient resting-places, and where a tray, with some thick slices of cake along with a large coffee-pot, indicated that the chairs were not set out for show. As soon as the ordinary form had been gone through here as elsewhere, every one seemed quite satisfied that the good God had now had *His* visit, and the rest was to be like all other visits.

A second exception was made by those houses, respecting which my worthy Elder had previously said, "These

people are for disputing." Here a religious dialogue awaited us. But no, I cannot term it properly a dialogue. It was a certain kind of reply in a doleful, mourning and preaching tone, instead of the usual "I thank you;" a reply stiff and unnatural, but still somewhat more to the purpose than my address. No answer was expected, and I too might very well have said, "I thank you."

A third exception, but luckily a rare one, came in our way when the man listened to me almost with a shake of the head, and the woman went on peeling potatoes or knitting stockings. This last especially, as I afterwards remarked, was a regular declaration of war; but as we go on we shall come to the principal encounter of this kind that I met with.

It was a gloomy evening, and we returned home under a genuine March shower of rain. When I had heartily thanked my worthy Elder and wished him good-night, I sat down by the fireside, feeling nothing, thinking of nothing, quite exhausted. My wife had three times said to me, "Well, what have you done to-day, William? What have you seen or heard? Tell us something." At last I answered pettishly, "What have I done, Kee? *Made known* what every one knew already, and *trusted* and *hoped* what I knew nothing about. What have I seen? Folding of hands without praying. And heard? Thanking without gratitude. All mummery!" So saying I sank back into my previous dullness, out of which my good wife could not rouse me all the rest of the evening. In the night I did nothing but dream of silent Elders, bowing masters, and praying mistresses of houses;

and when Cornelia called me up in the morning I replied, between asleep and awake, "Thank you; I'm not going to sit down." Her loud laugh awoke me.

Next week I was seated again at Meijerburg's, and my first word was, "If I could, I would do away with this visiting."

"And if *I* could," was the answer, "I would improve it. But tell me, now, how did you get on?"

I gave him an account.

"I wish you joy, my friend, of having knocked your head only against one place. You have got off uncommonly well, and your first visit has done no harm at least."

"Done no harm! and why then is not a practice abolished of which the best that can be said is that it does no harm?"

"Don't be in too great a hurry. I was only speaking of your *first* visit. See here, I know by experience that even when we are grey-headed it is with difficulty that we can repair the mischief done in the commencement by our youthful ardour. But I will say further, that your first visit has done some good. It has made you and your people a little better acquainted. And is it anything strange, that you were both a little stiff and formal? Is it not so in ordinary visiting. Society is mainly made up of forms; forms respecting weather and politics; forms of congratulating and of condoling, forms of welcome and of taking leave; and why then should we not have them in religion? These forms are necessary in this world, as the Venetian blinds which prevent people from seeing us through the windows, or as the

veil which may cover a handsome as well as an ugly face. Your intercourse with most of them will in time become more free, your words will go more to the heart, and you will only retain the form, when circumstances prevent you from being of any use, or where contest and dispute are to be apprehended."

"That may be all very true; but I do not by any means see clearly the necessity for this formal visiting. The appointed time, the appointed invitation, the appointed company of an Elder, all this makes what is stiff infinitely stiffer. Can I not to far more advantage make daily visits to my people?"

"By way of answer, my friend, I'll tell you how *I* fared. When I became a minister, they were the days of liberty and enlightenment, and I had my own share of the general fever: *Abolition, Renovation!* that was my motto. With respect to visiting, I thought just as you do now, and perhaps even more freely. I despised it as mere mummery and waste of words, and left it off more and more each year. In those days it was easier to do so than now. Everything was then turned upsidedown. Some more, some less, the trouble was all the same. I proposed then to visit my people as a fatherly friend, and to speak to them in my natural tone. What was the consequence? A part of them treated me with courtesy, and I called on them frequently; another part rather repelled me, and I called on them gradually less and less. The well-to-do people invited me, the poor looked strange on me as I entered their houses. This made my extra-visits the longer the more difficult, and what is difficult we readily defer. In short, there gradually

arose an estrangement between the bulk of my people and myself, which was apparent even in the church and at catechizing; and my vaunted pastoral visiting my flock gradually became mere ordinary conversation with private friends. I then awoke, and I resolved to return to faithful visiting from house to house. It certainly cost me much, but I persevered. I found especially in the teaching of the children an important subject of discourse. The attendance at church was now far better, when people saw that I looked to it; sundry objections to attending at the Lord's Supper gave way; and if I had done nothing more in some places than merely make the visit, it opened the door more easily for me when I came again. No doubt, all that is necessary cannot be discussed in a few minutes and in the presence of an Elder; but it then came into my mind, and I have since made it a regular custom on each visit, to set down where I intended to return by myself. These later visits I manage in general as if they were by chance, or as I was passing by, so that there is no stiffness or constraint. Thus then I became again, what I should have been from the beginning, the pastor of the whole flock, in which every door is open to me."

"Oh, my friend," continued Meijerburg in a most earnest tone, "learn from an old man who has often gone astray. Reject not too soon externals in religion, because they are frequently nothing more than externals. Try rather to renovate them and give them a better direction. Believe me, without external rules and strong bonds few men remain religious, and we ourselves too relax as if we felt we were not called at the proper time.

Even though the feelings of many toward you should still remain closed or cold, a kind word will here and there make its way in. The Great Sower *who went forth to sow*, also strewed much seed in vain; well, then, go in and out of nine houses to no purpose, provided your entrance into the tenth be blessed. But do not restrict your visiting to so short and so limited a period: take another day to it; make more use of the chairs that are offered you, if you feel inclined; this will make people more unreserved. You will then at length experience, what I told you before, that you will form your own mode of visiting. People never speak well when they are merely reciting."

It was rarely that I had heard my venerable friend speak with so much animation and so long without a pause, and I now observed for the first time what his previous object had been: he wanted me to have some experience of my own, in order to fill up the deficiency with his that was so dear bought. The lesson has certainly not been useless to me, and though I frequently have a struggle with myself in my stated intercourse, and pray all the more for the Spirit that was in Jesus Christ,—though I find many a visit disagreeable and many a one of little use,—I have never since that time said, "I should like to abolish this visiting." I have even learned to see the advantage of our constant attendant, which long appeared to me to be quite useless. The brother Elder, though in general a mute, proved to be many times a needful witness in the cases of ill-disposed people, and, as he was liked and respected, a faithful aid in the case of the lower order.

I often now look back at my first acquaintance, when a child, with the visiting system. What was then obscure has become clear. It never can be in a large town, what it can and should be with *us*, a firm bond between the spiritual father and his children. It is such a huge family with eight, twelve, ay more than twenty fathers. The far greater part never hear the voice of the Minister, unless it be from the pulpit. The poor are gone wild, and have quite lost the proper respect for him; the wealthy are in general strangers to him, and, accustomed to the polished tone of society, do not look for lessons on religion in their own houses. No acquaintance is formed, which is not to be kept up. Moreover the work which is so difficult in itself, is rendered still more so by the great difference of station, amid the absorbing affairs of a commercial city, by the utter ignorance of the mode of life, morals and ideas of the different members of the church; and it becomes most difficult when the more we look at it the stranger and stranger it becomes. . . . And yet should not a well-regulated, prudent and faithful system of visiting be even there of inconceivable advantage? Should not by means of it many half-heathens be awakened, at least their children be brought to receive instruction? Should not mayhap a closer junction of the Minister with his parish —in which he must live and remain,—should not a regular division of the Kirk-session among the parishes, and a constant connection with them, bring our town-congregations nearer to ours, where at least we know one another, and where no sheep goes astray that cannot be called back?

But why am I wandering thus away from Mastland into a large town? Reader, forgive me! I had *pia vota* in my mind, and I longed to give them utterance. Mayhap some one may be roused by this and find out something better. So be it!

X.

MY TAILOR AND MY BLACKSMITH.

THOUSANDS—I will not say *of my readers,* for who will promise me so many?—thousands then pass by the shop of a tailor or the forge of a blacksmith without paying any attention to them; or if they *do* cast a glance on them, they merely think of the making of a coat or the shoeing of a horse; and if in a village they see a shred of canvas or an old waistcoat hanging before the window, or if they discover an old horse-frame* before the door, their conception falls still lower, and they merely think on a rustic's jacket that's mending or a plough-horse that's shoeing.

We villagers see something else. Our spectacles—for very few people see the truth with the naked eye—our spectacles I say magnify, just as those of the townspeople diminish. As in their eyes a man seated on his money-chest is a citizen, so with us every tradesman is a power in the state. The shoemaker not unfrequently directs with his shoes the steps of the country-people, the tailor works on the heart by jacket and smock-frock, the baker knows how to close the mouth of women and

* *Hoefstal,* i.e. a frame for confining an unruly horse when shoeing. It was formerly used in this country also, where it was called a *trave* or *brake.*

children, and the smith with the heat of his fire animates the plans of the demagogues. If therefore you have these powers against you, if you cannot even get an advocate at the barber's—woe be to you!

Do you now feel how important is the title of this sketch: *My Tailor and my Blacksmith?* Well then I shall fulfil my promise, and give you an account of a couple of rencounters I met with on my first visiting-tour which are free from the uniformity of my other visits.

Our progress—the Elder's and my own—went on slowly and gravely. We had nearly got to the end of the village proper, and the houses were beginning gradually to stand further apart, and to alternate with gardens, orchards, and bits of grass-land. We now perceived to the right a neat-looking house, of which the blood-red bricks, the grass-green door, and the bright yellow windows already glared on us from afar, while the garden—so we denominate a little bit of kitchen-garden, with a walk down it edged with box, and half-a-dozen flowering shrubs planted apart—while the garden, I say, carefully weeded and raked up gave us a friendly smile. Yet nevertheless every step I advanced fell dreadfully heavy; when the front-door opened of itself, as they had, from a side-room seen us coming, it was just as if a stifling vapour impeded my breathing, and I believe I even turned visibly pale when I beheld the well-known blue nightcap. This blue nightcap covered the head of *my Tailor*, a head which had for several nights, so often as I dreamed of the approaching visiting, grinned at me like the head of Medusa. There was something in the look of that

head which filled me with involuntary aversion. His features were naturally regular and strongly marked, just as his person might be termed stout and well-formed; but still you might see in all that violence had been done to nature. His head moved so regularly with his measured pace, the muscles of his neck seemed so relaxed, his cheeks and under-lip hung down so that all bloom and life were driven from his strong and manly features; nay, even the curly hair was left neglected on his crown or forced down by the comb, while his intelligent brown eye peeping beneath his wrinkled brow sought to conceal itself.

I had already talked more than once with Baas* Perkers, long enough to get some previous knowledge of him, and short enough not to let him see through me too soon. When he began then to speak, a smothered groan awoke his slumbering features; he smiled, his stealthy eye brightened, and seemed to want to say more than his lips could, and in a quiet drawling tone he made the well-considered answer. He was occasionally friendly, but it was that kind of friendliness which put an iron band about my heart. There is a friendliness that will come out from the heart to meet you, that smooths the brow and opens the eye, that spreads over the cheeks like a cheerful dawn, and flows toward us in a kind laugh, while it speaks in unpremeditated words, which freely and easily make their passage from heart to heart. But there is also another kind of friendliness, which comes from the head and not from the heart, which is

* *Baas* (the American *boss*) is 'master' in relation to servants, apprentices, journeymen, and work-people in general.

the product of the will, or of the design to be friendly, or to appear so. Regular and composed, it raises the curtain from the brow, and sparkles in the retired eyes. It seems to cost it some trouble to screw the rigid features into a half-painful half-sympathizing laugh, and in drawling words, sweet as honey, kindness and love are measured out to us by the ell or sold us by the pound, or rather bestowed on us as an alms.

Am I judging too hard? But the remarkable friendliness now evinced toward me by Baas Perkers appeared to me to be of the latter kind, and no determined sternness or out-of-the-way stupidity could have taken me more aback. Besides, for the last few weeks I thought I had observed unfavourable symptoms in those rigid features. At church he stood in the one fixed place, leaning against a pillar, and was therefore ever in my eye. Now I had for some time back seen the eyebrows drawn down lower at some of my positions, the smile seemed more expressive of compassion, and some pious women gave an unquiet look after a slight shake of his head, which was repeated from time to time and indicated an outburst,—be it an earthquake or a tempest. And now there was the blue nightcap, that was only taken off in church, straight before me. An explanation seemed now unavoidable; of all the women in the neighbourhood not one failed to be at her window, and at the townhall people were anxiously awaiting the result of this visit of mine.

The opening of the front-door gave us at once a full view of the room in which we were expected; I say expected, for there were preparations of two kinds made

there, the one by Vanity, the other by Piety, and both, as I thought, at the bottom by Pride. For in the first place the Baas had raked up the garden and tied up the shrubs, and the wife had strewn sand over the bright red floor-tiles, that almost vied with the flowery compartments of a carpet; besides this the two chairs that stood ready for us were of a somewhat darker colour than elsewhere, and the bright-scoured plates reflected the glow of a regularly built-up fire. But other and more important preparations also awaited us. The folio Bible with brass clasps lay open on the table; and on the window-seat, on the backs of a pile of books, were to be seen the names of A-Kempis, Smijtegeld, Hellenbroek, and Groenewegen, while some folds of papers that were sticking out appeared to indicate the light cartridges that were prepared for the defence of this fortress.

As we entered, the woman was sitting with her back to the front-door; but a woman who is not quite deaf never remains in this position when the latch or the bell is moved. She looked round, and presented to us a figure and a face which contradicted the principle of Nature's always selecting in her works the curved line, the line of beauty, grace and distinction. Every part of her—her elbows, her knees, her shoulders, but above all her forehead, nose, chin and cheekbones—was formed in acute angles, and the rigid, sharp glances that she cast at us were in perfect unison with the unpleasant impression made by her figure and her features.

On our coming in and saluting them, Baas Perkers laid down a piece of bombasin, and his wife a stocking she was knitting, which I believe they had both taken

up merely for show. But on my addressing them and inviting them to the Lord's Supper,—stiffly and drily enough, I confess,—the blue nightcap was put on again before the Amen, and the wife's hands were not folded, —an indubitable token that the spiritual food that was offered was not accepted, and was even disdained. When I, in my turn was silent, the brow of the woman became more rigid and her eye keener, and on the face of Baas Perkers was displayed the well-known laugh, which this time expressed instead of kindness pity, or rather a contemptuous commiseration.

"Oh yes,"—these words were preceded by a groan deeper than usual,—"Oh yes, gladly would I share in the sacraments of free grace with God's chosen people, and there as a poor, blind, miserable sinner glory in the righteousness of my Surety; for I am carnal, sold unto sin, but the new man in me glories in the exaltation of the children of God. The Spirit also witnesseth with me that I may not approach with them who are out of the covenant of grace, with worldlings and unconverted: no, I may not approach to where a priest of Baal, a preacher of man's own righteousness serves the altar. 'Consort not with such,' so is it written, 'and sit not in the seat of the scorner.'"—So spoke Baas Perkers, and his wife cast her eyes up as high and groaned as deep as she could, and then added with a shrill voice, "To that I say Amen."

At present, in the silence of my library and after some years' experience I could easily make a reply, so appropriate, so complete, so powerful, that I should reduce my antagonist, on paper, to silence in a few minutes; but

then—reader, I will not conceal it—I was not prepared for such a tremendous onslaught, and I had therefore as many chances against me as the general, who is fallen on suddenly and furiously, before he has had time to form his plans for the engagement or has even drawn up his troops. My antagonist was eager for the fray, and urged it on with all the obstinacy of a determined character; and this I would rather have avoided, for I have always had an aversion to every kind of religious contest: here I saw nothing but injury—injury to the man himself, injury to my people and to myself, as victory would make him insufferably insolent and defeat inveterately bitter. In short my first reply was certainly weak and feeble, and gave Baas Perkers an opportunity for a second charge more violent and more personal than the first. But there was then something brisk in me, be it a good or bad principle, which at that moment came in considerable force, and I carried on with warmth the conflict which had commenced without any fault of mine.

I shall not repeat this long controversy, and indeed I could hardly do it accurately; for I did not succeed in limiting my adversary to one subject or to any regular mode of arguing. Perhaps I was not calm enough for it myself. At all events he was constantly breaking off with some strong assertion, or overflowing me with a stream of words in the "language of Canaan," with which I was less acquainted then than afterwards. Thus I remember that I said to him, "But, Perkers, what do you mean by the chosen people of God, with whom you were just now wishing to sit? and how do you know them from other people? as God alone *knows those who*

are his." When I asked this question the husband addressed me in these friendly terms, "See you there? Your speech makes it manifest that you have no part in the people of God;" and the wife cried out in a rough voice and with significant gestures, "Oh, stranger in Jerusalem!" I could not give you a literal account of the description that ensued on my repeating the question; it was so long, so roundabout and obscure, delivered with so much animation, and continued till the breath of the speaker failed. "But, Perkers," I resumed, "granting all that to be, it is only your own affair, to know whether you belong to that people and can receive the Communion to your profit. Let others judge too, and let me answer for my preaching."

I certainly said this not without some sharpness, and had touched him at once in a sore spot and brought him on his favourite ground. "Yes," cried he, "that is the voice of the false prophets of our time, who cry *Peace, Peace,* when there is no peace. We must bear with everything, let doctrine be corrupted, and the sacraments be desecrated; it is then as you wish it. No, Sir,"—this *Sir* was put with some emphasis in the place of the usual *Dominie,*—"No, Sir, in former days things appeared differently in the church, which is the body of Christ. Then the wolves were kept away from the flock, and though there were heresies, they were without and not within the church; as Paul says, 'A man that is a heretic reject' and 'put such from amongst you;' and Jesus, 'Let him be as a heathen and a publican.' At present then I should sit with Socinians and Arminians, and sing moreover songs on the *dignity of mortal man,*

and hear from the pulpit that all men are the children of God and that Christ died for all. Listen, Dominie! I can no longer remain under your teaching, and as it is likely to be the same still, I must join that portion of God's poor and wretched people who have separated from your church." Thus did the words flow out of the mouth of my Tailor, his eye shot fire, a purple glow spread over his cheeks, and he repeatedly raised his hands to heaven. I now felt extremely unpleasant. I saw that he was beginning to attack my preaching, and consequently my honour; I grew very warm, and yet would not give way to it. It however appeared necessary that I should defend my work, thus rudely assailed for the first time; but the warmer I grew the cooler grew my opponent, and his lips again were compressed to the well-known smile of pity. "Ah, yes," said he at length with a deep groan and a drawling tone, "Ah, yes! thus speak the wise and the learned of this world; but their wisdom is foolishness with God, it is not the work of the Spirit. When formerly I saw a preacher, Sir, I used to think to myself, 'What a learned and holy man is that!' But since the mighty God has laid his irresistible hand upon me, I have seen clearly that the natural man does not discern the things of the Spirit of God, be he ever so learned. But do not therefore think that I hate you. Oh no! With the deepest pity I behold you in the church, and while you are speaking I am so strengthened as to pray for you."

It was no longer to be endured. I know not how it was, but I could better have supported this man's malediction than his haughty compassion. I got up, pushed

back my chair somewhat too roughly perhaps—and said, with perhaps too much asperity, "Baas Perkers, as this is your opinion of your teacher, you have no need of me; but with respect to myself, leave that uncharitable praying for me alone, and rather pray for yourself, that you may become like one of the little children." I then put on my hat and went away, while Dame Perkers cried out, "O blind leaders of the blind!"

Fortunately we had a little way to walk before we reached the next house on that side of the way. A fresh breeze cooled my burning brow, and the walk itself composed my quivering limbs; but content was gone; my heart was deeply grieved at that strange union of piety and bitterness, and at the same time not satisfied with itself, and my mind was overwhelmed with a crowd of struggling shapeless ideas, which required time and calmness to be brought to form and rest.

I thus went on with my visiting, dull and meditative, till I reached the boundary of the village proper, and I returned by the houses on the other side. Going slowly along we drew near to the old unpainted forge of our blacksmith. It stood at the corner of a broad dike, thickly planted with trees. At either side of the forge stood a splendid old lime-tree, under which the villagers used to assemble every evening; for here is the rendezvous of the lovers of talk and of news, the cheap coffee-house of the labourer, in the summer under the limes, in the winter at the fire.

Here then was awaiting us on a bench before the door, the grey head and the calm features of the old Smith, whose once muscular but now stiffened limbs bore wit-

ness of early toil and subsequent repose. I have always had a child-like reverence for grey hairs, and above all I delight to view the traits of old-age when they express calmness, cheerfulness and the remains of early vigour, beauty and spirit. I should therefore have much sooner made more intimate acquaintance with our Smith, were it not that this man also was, as they say in the country, *for the good cause;* and this general encomium had deterred me from too hasty an acquaintance, just as it now made me approach the forge with leisurely steps. I soon saw that my apprehension was unfounded. Baas Klaver at our approach respectfully and kindly took off his striped cap, cordially gave us his hand, went in with us, and met my invitation half-way by saying, "What should I sooner do than partake of the Lord's Supper? My end draws near, and I feel more and more each day the need of giving myself up entirely to the Saviour, who redeemed me with his blood." He then pressed us to sit down with him at his table and take bread and coffee, while we should go on with our discourse. I will not conceal it that I was not yet quite at ease, and I was just thinking, under the pretext of great hurry, of refusing the chair, the bread and the coffee, when the old man began to speak, and without further consideration we sat down. "We know so little of one another, Dominie," said he, "and why should you be in such a hurry? I was just proposing to tell you somewhat of my history, if it would not tire you." I assured him of the contrary, and while he was knocking out his short black pipe he went on.

"When I was young I lived at a little place in North

Holland, where I learned the smith's trade at an uncle's by the mother's side—for I lost my parents early. At that time I was just like other young people, and I thought myself superior to many of them. I was sober and honest, and adapted myself to the regular pious life of my uncle's family; I did my duty in attending the Communion, and went regularly to church, though I was not sorry when anything prevented me; in short I was remarkably well satisfied with myself, and if I *did* happen to go wrong, I only said, 'I am young, and otherwise good enough, and I'm not to be a minister.' I thus reached my twentieth year, when my worthy uncle died, and I was obliged to go further off and among strangers. My first master was a wild, passionate fellow, that would hold his tongue for no one, and cursed and swore at a great rate. I was not used to let myself be trampled upon, so I gave as good as I got, and parted from him fighting and cursing. My second master was a cheerful, good-natured man, who was fonder of the tavern than of the church, and rarely missed a fair. I often went with him; at times I had an uneasy moment when I thought of the quiet regular Sunday at my late uncle's, but it was soon forgotten. Meanwhile the affairs of my careless master went so to the bad that I had to look for another place. I came then to live with a sickly old man, who had married a smart young wife. There was then much talk about me, my good Dominie, and I had therefore no blessing. The husband died, I married the wife and went on with the business, and thought I should be now just what I liked to be; but the Lord came and chastened me. My wife was extravagant and loose in

her morals, our children were sickly, the shop was laden with debt, and I was at last obliged to sell it; and I, I did not yet see that it was the hand of the Lord. I grew peevish and ill-tempered, and threw all the blame on my wife. My only comfort was to drink, and forget every annoyance. Meanwhile I grew poorer and poorer, and began to suffer want in reality. Our minister was a wealthy and a benevolent man, and I saw that in the winter coming on I might have need to apply to him. But he was naturally not well disposed toward me; so to make him my friend—I am still ashamed to have it to say—to make him my friend, I went to church for the first time for the last four years. I was very sore at heart, but what most affected me was the reading of the text, *Wherefore doth a living man complain? a man for the punishment of his sins?* God be thanked! His grace wrote these words deep in my heart. I had hitherto only complained of others, and of my own hard fate. I now began to look into myself, and to reflect seriously on my life. All my former goodness had been mere appearance. I sat there as a poor sinner, and God alone could deliver me from being lost for time and for eternity. I wandered about for some days in despair, till I found rest and light to pray to God and to take Christ as my mediator. I now began to work with renewed vigour, and here in Mastland I became a master instead of a journeyman. It is all God's doing. Had not God called me back, after the election of His grace, I should have been lost for ever. Neither can I do anything of myself, but being born again of the Spirit, I remain standing. And therefore do I hope, as a poor

sinner, to lay down my head, glorying in nothing but in the cross of Christ."

In nearly these words—for no doubt my pen has altered a word or two, and polished an odd rustic expression—in these words spake William Klaver, while tears of gratitude glistened in his eyes. He then took his pipe up again, filled it in silence, and poured out for us another cup of coffee.

I was affected. My imagination set in contrast with that honest, pious face, the braggart features under the well-known blue nightcap, and I could not avoid telling him of our interview, to which my Elder had somewhat to add. The old man shook his grey head, sat a moment in deep thought, and then said, "Well, well! that really grieves me. I have long remarked that Perkers and I were not on the same road. I cannot pretend to judge of the work of the Spirit in the heart of my fellow-sinner, but he takes my eye too much in the church. It seems to me that I sit there for myself, and am neither Elder nor Minister to sit in judgment on the doctrine or the congregation . . . though I may have notions of my own also . . ." These last words the old man pronounced slower and softer, and then held his peace, like one who was afraid he had said too much. This excited my curiosity. Perhaps it was not wise of me, but I wished to know at once what a pious man like this thought of my preaching. I therefore begged of him to tell me plainly what was on his mind, for I would gladly hear even contradiction and an unfavourable judgement when it proceeded from a pious and charitable disposition.

There then came a smile on the serious countenance of the old man, and after thinking a few moments he said, "To tell you the truth, Dominie, I have observed that some ministers get angry at once if they find that one does not think as they do in all things, and therefore I have not hitherto liked to talk to you about it. I am fond of peace, for where love dwells God dwells. I hope also to go to the house of God as long as I live and am able; Christ is preached there, even though it be under a veil. But there is one or two things in the church that I do not like. I'm not speaking now of the hymns; I do not join in them, and I keep to the psalms, as I am old and they are enough for me, but I find much that is good in *them* too as I read them over. But the preaching" . . . Here the old man became silent once more. I begged of him to go on. "Well then," said he, "the manner of preaching in these days is not what I find in my uncle's old books, and as I was used to in the aged minister to whom, as a means in the hand of God, I owe my conversion. I certainly hear much that is good in the church, but not enough about the curse of the law on the ungodly, and the necessity of the new birth for *all* mankind; and I am rather afraid that some of those who do so are satisfied with an outward social virtue, as I was myself in my young days. But he who would learn to glory in grace must get something more than this. I would also gladly see each person addressed in the application according to his particular state, as used formerly to be done. But when I am less satisfied with this, I go over to myself my old text, '*Wherefore doth a man complain? a man for the*

punishment of his sins? It may be the old man does not fully comprehend the new style of preaching, and that what he hears may be of use to him. And so, Dominie, God bless you in your important office, and give me also, through your ministry, to have the eyes of the understanding enlightened to see the wonders of His law."

At these last words Baas Klaver raised the striped cap from his grey head, and I added involuntarily *Amen.* I was moved. His opinion also was no panegyric; but in how totally different a tone was his disapprobation expressed, and by how much charity was it softened! At that moment I blamed myself for having, through a prejudice against all that was called *for the good cause,* neglected a genuine Christian, from whom I might perhaps have learned much ere this. On the present occasions however, it was too late to pursue the subject any further. I therefore promised soon to return, and explain to him the reasons that I thought I had for my way of seeing things and speaking; meanwhile I assured him that the foundation and main points of our faith were precisely the same. When I came home I formed a resolution, on more mature reflection, to examine carefully into the old way of preaching in our church, which is too often, from ignorance of it, condemned without discrimination, in order to adopt what was good in it. Perhaps too the old man's ideas contained some truth.

But—shall I conceal my weakness? No, reader, I will be candid. For the moment the wound inflicted by my Tailor was but half cured by my Smith. I was

dissatisfied with myself, for I had hitherto intended to edify them all in the best manner possible; dissatisfied with my people, our church and the teachers of former days; in short I ended the visiting of that day in a very unpleasant state of mind.

"And how do you get on now with your Tailor and your Blacksmith?" I'll tell you, reader; with the last uncommonly well, and with the first tolerably. *Charity*, says Paul, *believeth all things, hopeth all things, and thinketh no evil.* The old man therefore was satisfied with my fuller explanation, and only occasionally contracts his brow for a moment when I speak of human virtue and excellence, and of our own efforts in our conversion. With respect to the Tailor, I made him the object of close and nice observation before I ventured on him again. The universal disapprobation of the people, and the follies of the Dissenters in adjacent places, have hitherto kept him from quitting us altogether. He therefore comes now and then to church, but he always lets it plainly be seen that it is for the sake of the *church* he comes, and as for *me* —he ceases not to pray!

What then is this bitter-sweet disagreeable personage, whose blue nightcap even at a distance makes me shiver? —Is he a *hypocrite?* I must bear witness to the truth. I saw him at a later period on the brink of the grave, and he retained the same firmness and tranquillity, though without a hope of recovery. It is not easy to play the hypocrite thus.—Is he then a *fanatic?* But what is a fanatic? If he is one, who is actuated solely by feeling and imagination, we can hardly give this name to Baas Perkers; for he reads and inquires much, judges in his way

very reasonably, builds not upon inspirations and revelations out of the Bible, to which his wife is rather inclined, and is in truth a *theologian* among the tailors.

For my own part I believe, from the information I have since gotten, as firmly in his conversion as in that of my worthy smith. But while the latter has become a true and sincere Christian, with *him* the operation has been totally different. His hard and inflexible character has been acted on by the dread of Hell. He is become outwardly sedate, but his passions are still violent under that external restraint, and his pride has merely shifted its ground. Hitherto he was proud of his strength and of his profligacy,—he is now of his position as an elect, called and converted Christian. No minister will ever please him who does not pay court to his pride and point him out with his finger in the church, as a model of piety—from which God preserve *me!* You see there the reason of his bitterness, under the guise of Christian love, with which he deceives himself as well as others. You see there also the unfathomable gulf between him and me, through which alone our mutual relation can be borne. At present he still prays for me, but very little is wanting to make him curse me.

"But why trouble yourself about this one man? Let the obstinate conceited fellow go his own way."

Ah, reader! you are surely no pastor, no faithful and sincere village pastor. Every member of our congregation that quits us is to us as the prodigal son in the parable, a vacancy in our house and a thorn in our heart. Besides this, it is not for this man's own sake alone that I try to keep him, but for that of others who might be

led to follow him, and who are far better than he is. However, I seem outwardly to *let him go,* just as a mother pretends not to see her child that is wanting to go alone. A formal conference would be certain to lead to an open rupture, and drive to extremity one who is so true to his rigid notions. But what no reputation can do —my friends, you have some little knowledge of human nature?—is done by a friendly greeting, a little work for the needle, a visit when there are troubles; and, if he will learn anything, I now, when he is at church, say little or nothing directly against his notions, and never make allusion to him personally, but carelessly lay a little physic in his way; perhaps he picks it up without saying anything of it to me, and at all events he is no worse than he was; and meanwhile, as long as he is standing there by his pillar, some half-dozen weak souls believe that the Spirit of the Lord has not yet departed from the church.

And thus ends this Sketch. What think you now, reader? Should you have inquired so much after my Tailor and my Blacksmith if by any chance your way had led you through Mastland and by their houses?

XI.

RECEIVING OF MEMBERS.

WHEN the visiting was over, which had for a long time previously lain on my heart like ice, I breathed somewhat more freely. But now another, a really solemn ceremony awaited me, the reception and public consecration of new members of the church. "There now," thought I, "is my first harvest-home. The harvest that death collects for Heaven is hidden from our eyes. We may sometimes fancy that we see on the death-bed the heavy-laden stalks, but we may deceive ourselves; it is not our task, but that of God's angels, to separate the chaff from the corn, and to gather the latter into the barn. But our harvest-home is when we bring new members to the congregation, and to their Lord which is in Heaven; for after constant and patient cultivation of their faith, we deem them ripe for living on their own responsibility in this sinful world, ripe for keeping up the remembrance of the Lord, along with his dearly-purchased flock. Yes, there is a certain degree of noble pride in being able to say, 'This plant of faith I have cultivated,' or, as I shall now be able to say, 'Another hath planted, I have watered, but God hath given the increase.'

"Yes, I love you, ye young Christians, who, just at

the time when you are at the cross-road of Hercules, the decisive point of your path of life, stretch your hand to Heaven and say, 'I will be Christ's, and not the world's.' I love you, ye ancient of days, who come back to the work of a negligent or an ignorant youth, who will yet before your death confess the Lord, that after your death he may confess you before his Father. Happy will it be for us, my people and myself, to sit with you, who come to take the place of our departed, who, as we hope, sleep in the Lord. And if your profession is simple, what is hidden from the wise, God has revealed to the simple and to children."

Thus spake I in my heart, and wept; and the tears were to me an unutterable source of pleasure.

Reader, I have always loved truth, never feared it or shunned it. If I sometimes amused myself with castles in the air, I immediately after examined them closely, even at the risk of losing them. For I will awaken and see the light, though the twilight is sometimes pleasanter, and is the mother of agreeable dreams; I will see, even if I see what will pain me.

We will therefore, reader, take off the spectacles of imagination, to look at the truth with the naked eye, and even, if necessary, examine it with a magnifying-glass. Should this take away many an ideal, cause us many a bitter disappointment, what we *do* see is there, and will not deceive us any longer.

Come round then with me among my people, the last day before the reception of my first members. We will

go into some of their houses, at others we will only look in at the windows, or listen to their conversation in the street; and you shall hear and see more than *I* did at that time. Praise be unto the divine Providence, which slowly and carefully raises so many a veil before us!

It is a fortnight to the time of reception. It has cost me some trouble to restrict my choice to those whom I judged to be fit. It seemed natural that the choice should be guided by the knowledge, the more or less serious temper, and the Christian bearing of my scholars; but as I was not sufficiently acquainted with the Mastlanders, age and circumstances decided in most cases, and I naturally took their own desire into account.

Thus there was among others a girl rather old, whom I had received as a scholar from my predecessor. She had, with some intervals, attended catechism for twenty years, and I did not clearly discern why she alone should constantly see a new generation rising to life around her, and remain immovable in her place, the veteran of the Mastland catechizing. She learned questions, however, just like any other girl, and appeared to be of a quiet temper, and of a good moral character. Nevertheless, as often as I spoke to her of reception, she only muttered some unintelligible words.

I therefore, as I could get nothing out of her, went into the house to her parents. First a narrow lane, and then a little passage, and so one came into a dark room where the family lived. The old man was sitting at the fire, with a pair of old wooden shoes on him, and had

taken upon him the troublesome task—as he indeed did every morning, noon, and evening,—of keeping up the fire under the iron pot, by a continual supply of straw, stubble, and flax-hull. The wife, somewhat younger and more active than her husband, was washing. She rubbed the suds off her arms, dried them with her apron, and gave me a seat.

I sat down and introduced the subject. The old man looked at me without moving, and nodded. I supposed he agreed with me, and was convinced by my cogent reasons. But when I had done he still nodded; it was in fact a relaxation of the muscles of the neck which made him thus like a mandarin; besides the good man was deaf and stupid, and had not comprehended a single word of my rather high-flown language, which still savoured a little of the university. I was annoyed at observing this; but the old wife—who like every woman was by nature more capable of comprehending what was unexpected—spoke for me, and said, or rather screamed, "Father, the Dominie wants to receive Matty."—"Well, child," was the answer, "that's a good thing."—"Ay, ay, you talk as if it was nothing, and yet it is a very serious business. What do you say, worthy Dominie?"

To this question I of course could not give a negative. I was come to advise the communion of Molly, but not to have it lightly regarded. I therefore spoke earnestly and feelingly on the importance of the subject, stating how decisive it was of the whole of one's life; and was intending to add that, when the importance of it was felt, we were best prepared to look up with prayer to God, to unite ourselves with the Saviour. . . . But the instant

I said it was a matter affecting *our whole life*, the talkative woman interrupted me with:—

"Oh yes, Dominie, I've no fault to find with that. It is, no doubt, for the whole life; but that does not prevent its being a serious business for poor people, especially at this time, when we've hardly got over a bad winter, and there's such miserably low wages to be got."

It was now my turn to look stupid, for I understood as little as the old man had done what all this meant, and I would not ask. I depended therefore on the garrulity of the woman, which left room for no pause, and I gave a sort of dubious sound to induce her to go on.

This succeeded, as I expected. "What!" said she, "the Dominie makes no account of it, but *I* call a black dress, which of course one should have, no trifle for poor folk like us. Matty is a careful girl, and for some years she has been laying by for this, but it nearly all went to the doctors when she had the quartan-ague. I will however do my best now, for why should Matty be always behind others? The farmer will perhaps be inclined to give something, by way of advance, you know" . . .

She thus went on, and I let the flood of words run to the end. I was driven completely out of the field, or rather had to take ground that was quite new to me. I had come to talk about Communion, a solemn pledge of faith and hope, an eternal union with God and the Saviour,—and now, in lieu of all that, I had to talk about a black dress, the indispensable requisite for a first Communion!

I returned to my manse in low spirits. As I went along meditating I arrived at juster ideas respecting the

poor woman. She was not altogether wrong when she said, "The Dominie makes no account of it."

Look now, reader, through that dim little pane of glass set in lead, if you can see through it. There sit two old people at their fireside. The blaze of the fire displays their coarse skin and wrinkled faces. They have been sitting for some time motionless; he with both hands on his knees, she with her right arm on the table supporting her head. Let us listen to what they are saying.

The wife. "A *schelling* (six stivers) for a whole day! What is one worth when they're old?"

The husband says nothing.

The wife. "No, it was a different time when I lived with uncle Aai, who when he was in his seventieth year still got sixteen stivers. And yet house-rent and firing and candles are not a bit cheaper, neither is serge or bombasin."

The husband still said nothing.

The wife. "Ay, James, you'll keep saying nothing till we have to give up eating, or till you find in the winter no fire in the place. Look, I had gold and silver when I took you, but I have long repented of it. And if you now only did some fiddling work to come at the food" . . .

The husband now begins also, in a dozing way and with the air of one shaken out of his sleep, and says, "*I*, wife? why I work every day I can get work."

The wife. "No, no, I don't say you're too lazy; but you do nothing but work; you never reckon beforehand, and don't consider what's to come. For instance there's the learning. The Dominie has been teazing you ever so long to do him the pleasure to go learn from him. If

you do that you'll get over one bad winter. And you know too, just as well as I do, that the dole makes a difference of five stivers in the week for our housekeeping, over and above what the Town gives; for the Deacons act kind enough" . . .

The husband came to me next day, and uncovering his grey head said, the Dominie had said it the last time, and he had talked it over with his wife, and he would go through with it; for he was an old man and every year might be his last.

My wife looked at the man with a friendly reverential glance, and said when he was gone, "*Blessed are the pure of heart.* What a venerable old man that is, William!"

This had occurred half a year before. He was now admitted at Easter, and in November—he received alms. And when two years later he was buried at the expense of the parish, his wife said to herself, "It does me good to think that I made James go to teaching; for the coffins of the common poor are mere common ones, and see now what a handsome brown coffin!"

Come on further with me, reader.

I was sitting, ten days before the reception, with my feet at the fire, for it was a cold spring. This time it was at a *farmer's*. This is a term at which they turn up their nose in the city, for there *farmer* is the antipode of *gentleman*; but in the country it is a title of honour, *farmer* being a higher rank than *labourer*. Here however half-a-dozen cows and a score acres of bad land formed the whole farm; no more polish was to be looked for than in a labourer; but by so much the more the pride of being, as well as the richest, a *farmer* also.

"Well, then, Dominie, that's kind of you," the woman thus greeted me. "We've seen you here two or three times at rich Govert's on the dike, and often said, Will the Dominie not call sometime or other on *us* too?"

So she went on chattering, and I filled a pipe. Meanwhile the eldest son came in, a long gawk, with a pair of huge coarse hands, a red face, and lank light-fair hair. He looked amazed, and did not well know whether he should make a bow or not, speak or hold his tongue, sit or stand, and therefore did nothing at all, but turned round and went away.

"Ho, Arij!" shouted his mother after him; but Arij, with greater nimbleness than one would have expected, had made his escape through the stable. "Well now, that's unlucky," panted the mother, who came in out of breath, while I sat quietly alone waiting to see who would win the race. "That is unlucky of my Aai—at other times he is such a sprightly lad—but that's the way with him when he sees strangers. I was just thinking of speaking about him, and so I am glad that you're come. How is it, Dominie? He must go out this year, for we cannot afford to keep him any longer idle. Could you give us any help in the matter?"

I had come purposely to speak about Arij. I had heard that my predecessor had intended to receive him, and as he was now to go to service, I would gladly have him make his profession as a safeguard against many a temptation in his new position. But on account of his rapid mode of saying his lesson, I had never heard a word good or bad from him. I *now* am aware that this was partly owing to my own mode of speaking and ques-

tioning, but I was not aware of it *then*. I therefore wished to know if he were confused, obstinate, stupid or indifferent, and of this I conceived that his parents must be the best judges. I then mentioned my difficulty, and said that I was unable to form an opinion of her son as he never said a word.

"Well, well," was her reply, "that's what I cannot understand. Does he say nothing when he's with you? and at home he always knows his questions so well; he says them over to me every evening. He must then be bewildered and forget them as he goes to the village. See now, it was quite different with me when I used to go a-learning. Dominie Van-der-Plas often said to my mother that there was no one quicker at it than me, and *that* the double Hellenbroek!* But Heaven has not bestowed such precious gifts on every one."

I did my best to convince her that Arij repeated very well, but that I could not ascertain whether he understood it or not, as he never answered anything except out of his book. So far all went well; but when I would convince her, by cogent reasons and by examples from the Bible, that profession is an affair of the heart and of conviction, and not of mere memory, and whatever else I might say, the good woman sat with folded hands looking before her, in a reverential posture, and understood just as little as she did at church on Sundays.

I stopped, for I had to make an end of the business, and desired that Arij should come to me next day.—A fortnight later he was a member.

We will now listen to another dialogue in the street.

* A writer of the last century.

It is on a clear but cold evening. This however does not deter the men who have done their work from assembling on the dike: they would not be much warmer at home. Here and there a woman puts her head out over the hatch, to take a view of the gathering of the men in the street and hear some of what they are saying. A couple of these women engage in a negotiation for taking snuff together, the usual sign that they have both of them time and desire for a chat.

"Well, neighbour," begins the one, "what say you now to our Dominie? Is he not quick at the reception?"

"Hold your tongue, wench! The man should have more sense than to set about that business so suddenly. He doesn't know Mastland yet as well as we do."—The woman was not far astray.

"Well now, that's what I said to Piete-Meu, when she told me of it last Sunday evening."

"And what'll come of it? We shall get all sort of rabble in the church, when it's so easy for them to get in. There's that old James Vlos. It's quite plain that he's doing it for the sake of alms. The Deacons do not take it well of the Dominie either. But they say he's somewhat headstrong, and says that he'll do as he likes."

"Well now, and then that Arij of the Green Dike that looks so silly,—the Dominie sure does not know about the fair last year?"

"And Matty shall now too get through, I hear."

"Now then, she should get married in May, if there's no necessity for that. Besides, the poor fool has been long enough laying by her cents for it."

"But Maaike Lobel, what say you to that?"

"Eh, what do you say? I didn't know that. Well, look now! And has the man really not heard of what happened to her two years ago? But they don't say anything about that now."

"Ay, who is there that's not received? No, I'm thinking we've had but a bad bargain of this Dominie. Baas Perkers, who has a good right to speak, says he's too loose in doctrine, and as Baas Perkers says" . . .

"I should think so. Neither have I from the very beginning thought much of our new purchase. And only imagine it! There's my Polly, a girl like milk and blood, and who's the same age and in the same book with rich Govert's pale girl, she is so fretted that she must stand behind her, just so. But I told her that, if she's not received, she shall not learn any more of this fellow."

"Ay, neighbour! but Govert does as he likes with the Dominie. I'm thinking that my Jacky shan't go any more either. He was longing so to go up this time, but, it seems, he was too young. Too young! Only think! A fellow like a bee, that will work fifteen hours a day, when there's need, as well as the best."

Here they took snuff again. The pinch was this time somewhat larger, and the dialogue grew very warm; or rather the heat, which had been brooding all the day long, burst into a strong bright flame.

You will observe, reader, I had refused to receive the son of one of them, a lad of seventeen and full-grown, but deficient in intellect; and I had passed over a daughter of the other, because she was far away the stupidest

of all. They both showed their spite, by immediately keeping away from the catechizing, and both forgot it again toward the following winter, while I made as if I took no notice of it whatever.

Alas! what is there now remaining of our ideal of the harvest-home of the teacher and his flock? What is become of the young members of Christ, at the hazardous cross-road of life, armed with faith? of the pious old people, who wish to confess the Lord once more before they go to Him?

See now, reader, this is what comes of giving ourselves up to the building of castles. We work them out with the most intense interest; but as soon as we observe that there is no trace of them to be found in the ordinary town-houses, we are ready to tumble them down again. The sentimental philanthropist contains within him the future misanthropist.

No, I take away nothing from my ideal. I only add emphatically to it, that it is a mere ideal, and that therefore only a few scattered features of it, with here and there a feeble adumbration of the whole, is to be met with here on earth.

Look at yonder mother, who silently and innocently presses the hand of her daughter and says,—"Polly, child, you are now a member; mind and live according to your profession." It may be that these brief words of a mother go deeper into the heart than our eloquent exhortations.

Or follow in thought that old woman, who in her

seventieth year has made a sincere profession, and now totters away on her stick, so comforted, in the hope "that the Lord will now receive her to grace."

Look at those young members, who have now for the first time made their profession, before they go as conscripts. There seem to be no relics of it in the barrack, but yet there is one who walks along in silence, while the others are staggering drunk along the street, thinking to himself, "My Dominie never taught me that."

Is it not also an inestimable gain that, owing to this instruction, some understand me better in the church? that others make a more proper use of the church and the Eucharist, and more readily receive friendly counsel, and more dread a rebuke from me because I am *their* Dominie? And may not honest tears be shed, at the first Communion, for former sins, which perhaps are unknown to us?

Then the general anxiety too with which each judges of the choice of new members, is there not some good at the bottom of it? It is then at least not by any means a matter of indifference to them with whom they should be associated as companions, and whether that profession was made by unworthy persons. In a large town the reception of new members is a domestic festival for the relations, but it is little or nothing to the community. What signifies a pailful more thrown into the sea? But here the whole Kirk-session is assembled to receive the neophites, and the whole population to see them. Every one recognizes a friend or relation or neighbour among them, and to the Minister they are all

known as scholars and sheep of his pasture. Something is here perceived of the brotherly feeling of the early Christians, closely bound to each other, as they were separated from the world, yet still not without spot or stain.

I therefore retract nothing, I repeat it, of what I said before, provided people do not require too much at once. There are intermediate colours between white and black, and the twilight comes between light and darkness. Each year the reception of new members is still to me a harvest-home. I only look more carefully where I put in the sickle, that I may as little as possible gather the tares with the wheat, and the unripe with the ripe corn. I endeavour to make up by my own feelings for what comes short in those of my scholars and my congregation. True zeal should grow warmer the cooler it appears to be in others.

Above all I strive to make, as far as in me lies, the public Confirmation solemn and impressive; and at the first or last table of the Lord's Supper, at which the new members sit, it is as if a voice from Heaven called to me, "Once more feelingly and powerfully spoken, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! They are still your scholars, your last words may perhaps abide with them, while your former have been scattered by the wind. Speak then, admonish, warn, menace if it be necessary. Let not their ruin be upon your head!" It is my belief that if ever I have spoken well, it has been on one of these occasions.

XII.

AFFAIRS OF THE POOR.

"THE PUBLIC ARE INFORMED, THAT ON WEDNESDAY EVENING NEXT THE RETIRING RELIEVING-OFFICER, PAUL KORS, WILL GIVE IN HIS ACCOUNT, WITH WHICH AT THE SAME TIME WILL BE CLOSED THE ACCOUNT OF THE LAST YEAR BUT ONE."

"Have you heard, neighbour?" said an old woman as she was going out. "Shall that old property of Van-Pleun, who's dead, come to the hammer?"

"Yes," was the reply, "and it is full time that we should get our money for wooden shoes and shop-goods; at least I hope that is what it means."

"Now then, it's well that he's lying in the churchyard. Every one dies in his own time."

Meanwhile I came home, and the first word my Cornelia said as she was taking off my band was, "I am delighted, William, that you have done at last with that wearisome business."

"Done, indeed! We've not got so far yet; for I expect that Wednesday will be an unpleasant day."

"Well well, that one day will go to its forefathers like all other days. They'll sign with a serious face, and —there's an end of it."

The following Wednesday—it was exactly the anni-

versary of our coming to Mastland—the accounts of the Poor were settled, and with the termination of this matter some unpleasant scenes of my life were brought to a close.

But the reader does not yet feel all the importance, all the unpleasantness and the pleasantness too of that day; he partakes not in the recollections of it, and would not understand the debates which were so profuse; were I to repeat them to him, I should go back to the first Sunday after my induction, and the commencement of my participation in the *affairs of the Poor*, to make him comprehend what was to occur afterwards, and after that again. I prefer therefore going back at once, and pursuing the course of affairs from the beginning and in their whole extent. The reader will get the result of my experience far cheaper than I got it myself.

Affairs of the Poor—what does not that single expression comprise? Doubtless there are very many matters that we can get the knowledge of only by experience, and I believe that disagreeable things belong particularly to this class. When you see a porter pass a hundred times by your window, you may perhaps now and then think that his burden is rather heavy, and judge by his bent posture that he carries it with difficulty; but if only for once the load were put on your own shoulders for a few hours, you would never see him pass again without speaking of it and pitying the poor man sincerely.

In like manner I had read a hundred times in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, that when the

Disciples were multiplied, the distribution of relief began to be burdensome to the Apostles, and they caused Deacons to be appointed; but I had never rightly felt what a heavy task it must have been, *along with the ministry of the Word,* as they express themselves, *to serve tables also.*

According to their praiseworthy institution there are now peculiar relievers of the Poor; and in large parishes the Ministers have little more to do with the affairs of the poor than to recommend the collection at the church-service. But in a village the management of the Poor is altogether a matter belonging to the Kirk-session, although the Deacons are the acting power; and in matters of the Session the Minister is everything,—the man who advises and projects, the man who carries on correspondence and sets entangled matters right, and in fine the man on whom is laid the blame of everything. Thus on us weigh all the annoyances of the Poor, the reliever of the Poor, and the Poor-law, while the members of the Session say, tranquil as death, "The Dominie has to provide for that, my time is up New Year's Day."

It was the first Sunday after my induction. As I had been very little in villages, and had still less preached in them, their petty usages were strange to me. I was thinking of something quite different. I had, from Hebrews xii. 28, dilated on the *new and eternal covenant of grace,* with a certain degree of restraint no doubt, but still with warmth and thorough earnestness. Oh, those are lofty soul-elevating matters that we have to say to a Christian congregation! In this frame of mind I had

left the pulpit, saluted the Kirk-session, and gone home into my own room.

In the afternoon, perhaps from the exertions in the morning,—perhaps, too, because it gave me more trouble to preach on the Catechism for the first time,—I was less animated, and I came down with slower steps. Luckily I bethought me of the early lesson I had received, and which I had forgotten in the morning. *I gave the Brethren the hand.* They smiled a little. I saw clearly that in the morning my hands were more observed than my words. It was still a new, still an awkward Minister, and an old Kirk-session, most of whom had sat many times in the *housie*.*—Oh, human nature!

"We have now to count the *cents* of the whole day; Dominie was in such a hurry in the morning."

The person who said this was one of my staunchest supporters at the time of the call; he said it with a good-natured face, and yet I found it difficult to give him a friendly look for some weeks. How little he knew me!

For some years now I count along with them, but as I am frequently deeply penetrated and filled with the truths of which I had been speaking, the sudden transition from heavenly to earthly things still grates on my feelings. Everything belonging to the matter is an annoyance to me; the old brown table in the room—or *housie* as they call it here—the rattling of the keys, the entry-book, and, most of all, the cold, trifling, or unfeeling remarks of the members of the Kirk-session.

* I have ventured to employ this Scottish diminutive for the original *huisje*. It is, as we shall see, the place in which the affairs of the Poor were transacted. We might perhaps render it *Vestry*.

But I did not get off with this *counting cents,* as the country-people simply enough term it. In the forenoon of the following Sunday I beheld under the pulpit a large basket of bread, which on account of the Ordination had for the only time in many years to resign its place, and which I had not observed on the week-days. After the counting and entering, the relieving-officer—the oldest of the acting Deacons—took a piece of paper out of his pocket, half worn-out and illegible, and called out in a measured tone, "John Van-der-Zand, two loaves; Peter Kortenhoef, one loaf and a *dubbeltje*" (ten cents), and so forth; and those who were named came one after the other and received their portion from the hands of the youngest Deacon. Now this was in itself by no means an unsuitable close of a Christian assembly. The love-feasts of the first century, at which a whole congregation sat *eating with joy and singleness of heart,* are no longer possible in these days; but there is some remnant of them when in the assembly of the congregation care is had that *there is none of the faithful that lacks* (Acts iv. 34). This, then, is a visible fruit of the Gospel. For ever since the days of the Redeemer, even among Jews and Moslems, there has been an insoluble bond between the worshiping of a mild and compassionate God and the visiting of widows and orphans in their affliction.

So far all goes well. Every week I see poor people come to the distribution, who with an honest and grateful look receive their portion and depart with friendly greetings; the infirm old man leaning on his staff, the poor widow with her patched cloak on her, and a couple of children with wooden shoes after her. But very often

it is different; and how often has it prevented me from taking home with me from the pulpit a cheerful and animated frame of mind! It seems that *the murmuring because people were neglected in the ministration* (Acts vi. 1) has remained as an inheritance to all ages from the first church in Jerusalem. It certainly is not without foundation. Who can take on him to assert that he deals uprightly at all times and in all places, when the one conceals his poverty and the other displays it ostentatiously, or even magnifies it? But he who has *little* imagines he has *too little.* It seems therefore innate in the poor that they would sooner have no bread, provided others had none, than that they should eat dry bread while another had it buttered. Hence chiefly arise the continual annoyances. It is not alone mothers that come complaining that their children have no bread —who would blame a mother for that?—but there is constantly one whose neighbour has got so much, while he is obliged to do with less; and a woman who must get turf because another woman has got it; there is such evil-speaking of those who, according to their account, do not deserve it so well, or do not want it; and thus every good deed done to the one comes back to us as a reproach through the mouth of another.

Once more. "Poverty *seeks* craft" says the proverb, ay, and it *finds* it too. Preach as honestly and as impressively as you will and can, against lying and deceiving, there comes forth, immediately after the application, one of your hearers with the most shameless face in the world, and stoutly and vigorously asserts that he has not earned anything, no, not a single cent, while you

afterwards hear that in the week gone by he was at work; or he swears by an omniscient God that he has eaten nothing that day, and the bread is lying cut up in his house. The members of our Session think it quite natural for him to deceive them, for *poverty seeks craft.* And you, with your eloquent discourse on lying and deception in your coat-pocket, and with anger and displeasure in your heart, you go home!

But when you are obliged to refuse—and how often are we not!—see then the sudden change! You know not what is become all at once of the tears of the poor woman; it is as if they were absorbed by the skin, or had run back into the eyes. The hand that was just now imploring gives the door of the room a bang, and the other arm is clapped a-kimbo. And now—but halt! I have no pleasure in setting down that flood of words; any one can conceive them. In my first years I used to come home after one of these encounters, discomposed, vexed, angry, I cannot tell how. Now, as I am conscious that we have done all that we could and ought to do, I can very calmly observe with what ease the uneducated can speak and gesticulate whenever their dearest interests are concerned, and passion has overcome the awe of their superiors; how all their passions will come out at their mouth, while they never know the deep internal pains which undermine the health and strength of the educated; and, in contrast with this vehement passion, I behold beside me the rigid, ice-cold features of the Reliever, who calmly waits till the poor woman's breath is exhausted, and then, cool as death, replies, "As you have *nothing more* to say, Molly, you must go on one

side, that others may come up."—*Nothing more,* and she had such an awful deal more to say!

There is perhaps no part of our formularies, good reader,—and that you can now best conceive,—which I read more impressively than the exhortation at the annual appointment of new members of the Session: "Ye deacons, be prudent and cheerful in the distribution of alms. Come to the aid of the afflicted, and take heed to the widows *indeed,* and orphans.—And ye poor, be poor in spirit, and behave with all reverence toward those who have care of you. Be thankful and murmur not. Follow Christ for the food of souls, and not for bread."

You fancy, perhaps, reader, do you, that you have now learned all the evils of the *affairs of the poor?* —Oh, would it were so! With the pauper at least we soon have done, if we wish it, though in a disagreeable way. He may complain, murmur, weep,—he must submit in the end. If any difficulty should remain, it is between us and our conscience; it is not a social one, and can be got over when there is a punctual discharge of duty. But one has far more to do with those who *give* than with those who *receive,* and it is not so easy a matter to convince them of the truth of our Lord's words: "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" But come along, I will rather narrate than complain, especially as I owe you an explanation of the words at the beginning of this Sketch.

As soon as I had exchanged the first compliments and made the first *reconnaissance,* I saw at once that there

was a great difficulty in our management of the poor. It seemed as if they had reserved it to afford me an opportunity of giving a proof of my wisdom, something like Solomon's first decision. Ay, the worthy Peter Van-der-Zanden himself who, on other occasions knew how to help an old business out of the world with a decisive declaration, had not even touched this with his finger.

The affair was this. In the house at the corner nearly opposite mine, a little before I came, had died after a long illness Pleun Kortebrand, who while he lived was farmer, baker, grazier, in short everything that one can be in Mastland, one or two trades excepted which he did not understand. As Pleun was a good-humoured fellow, and bore no ill-will to any one, he was universally beloved. And as he transacted much business and was ready to undertake anything, the public had never any doubt of his being well-to-do; the few who muttered the contrary were put to silence by his friends as slanderers; and perhaps, at least at first, they had no other grounds for their suspicion than their own envious wishes.

Every one in Mastland then was delighted when about two years before my arrival Pleun Kortebrand was appointed deacon, and the following year as administering deacon or relieving-officer took the management of the poor-box, and of the distribution to the poor.

Everything then went on smack-smooth. The poor extolled his kindness and benevolence. His associate, the *Assessor* or younger Deacon, talked no doubt of too liberal a distribution; but Pleun with a good-natured

laugh set the Session at ease and promised a good account,—with us that means a good final settlement,—and my aged predecessor, a weak man, thought all was right.

The reader, who is not acquainted with these matters, must know that each relieving-officer gives in his separate account in the course of the following year, and on this occasion receives from his successor the *deficit* or hands him over the *surplus*. Meanwhile this last has entered on his year, and receives and gives out without knowing whether his predecessor has left him money or debt. This becomes frequently a difficulty afterwards to the guardians of the poor themselves, as well as to their creditors, as it is very much the custom, and the people think it quite natural, that one relieving-officer does not choose to pay the debts contracted by others. This between ourselves; let us now return to the matter in hand, which meanwhile is beginning to grow thorny.

Toward the end of his year of office Pleun became short-winded and sickly. Every one sympathized with him, as he himself had always shown sympathy with any one that was unfortunate; he showed it now once more by having, in consequence of the cold weather setting in early, a plenteous distribution of brandy made to the poor.

The winter caused his vital powers to decay away slowly, with an incurable consumption. Meanwhile there was some talk of settling the poor-accounts. Master Balyon, who was wont to write them out fairly in the book, was willing to do more than ever for the sick man. His successor also offered to lend him a hand in the task

of collecting and paying. But no one could venture to press him hard; for Kortebrand, like most people in that disease, had no idea of his approaching end. He put off, and death surprised him.

Pleun Kortebrand's corpse was laid in the earth as that of a universally esteemed villager. The poor gazed at the funeral with tears. His friends and relations followed the bier in silent sorrow. His children lamented and his widow was comfortless.

But if a funeral is melancholy, the transition from that day to ordinary life is, to my feelings, doubly and trebly melancholy. The sorrow for the loss is mingled with a mournful consolatory feeling; for death makes us think on an eternity, a resurrection and a future union. But the troubles that so many a death-bed leaves after it, and the disputes which it causes, awaken an ice-cold dismal sadness in the breast of the philanthropist. Self-interest and ambition, meddlesomeness and pride, niggardliness and slander, which had been scared away for a moment by the sight of the dead, awake again and resume, with redoubled force and bitter joy, their dominion over poor human nature.

A few days after the funeral the actual relieving-officer, Paul Kors, a cool and firm, but upright and punctual man, called on the widow in order to receive the papers and money belonging to the poor. This was quite a simple kind of woman, and she now was stupified with grief. She had nothing to say but that her husband used a particular drawer in his desk for this purpose. With some difficulty this drawer was found. It contained some few loose, in general nearly illegible memo-

randums, some receipts, still more accounts, and no money. The relieving-officer made more inquiries, but was nothing the wiser, and left the woman, saying that he would notreceive *that lumber*, and that she must manage to make out a proper account.

All this took place in the time of the vacancy. The usual refuge of the unhappy, my aged predecessor, after long lingering was dead; and to go to the Burgomaster —the poor widow had not courage to do *that*, for she had just been applied to on his part for some arrears of rent, for which she could still less find money in the drawers of the desk.

The only hope now of this unhappy, simple woman lay in Master Balyon. With all his pedantic gravity he possessed a genuine and truly Christian philanthropy. He might, as far as was possible, keep to himself that he, Herman Balyon, had set to rights this matter and that which no one else could unravel; but with all that, he was in this way a true friend and a useful citizen. He accordingly with a grave face put on his spectacles, and arranged the papers, noting down a series of regular annual articles, with which he was well acquainted; but his brow contracted more and more as he went on; at last he bit the pen he held in his mouth till it cracked between his teeth, and crushed the two points flat on the table; all was now lost: for, with the worthy Herman Balyon, this gesture always indicated that a matter was hopelessly involved. If calculation alone would have sufficed, he would have done it by all the rules in Bartzens; "And even if some documents were missing," said he to his wife, "I

should have made out an account *taliter qualiter;* but the money, which should have been still in hand, and, as I fear, a great many articles of which we know nothing . . ."

The Mistress nodded, for she understood right well, that even with two Latin words, an account cannot be made straight—without money.

What Balyon feared came to pass. The creditors of the poor-funds appeared to have paid little attention to the conduct of the relieving-officer, and those of the estate itself to that of the Burgomaster. All fell on the poor widow, who had no money for any one. At every turn, as they were parting, she heard more bad of her husband than she had heard good of him at the funeral. The town-hall was filled every evening more than usually, and the children of the gossiping neighbours endured more cold and hunger than at other times, though the poor things had had neither art nor part in "Pleun's bad account."

Meanwhile the Session met, the Master appearing, and it was resolved to let the affair stand over, as long as the estate of the widow was not legally disposed of, till the wished-for and near-at-hand arrival of the new Minister.

There I soon sat, with the most difficult of cases before me, and I wanted the wisdom of the great king to find at once the true solution of the first riddle, chiefly because I had to find something that Solomon had already—*money*. I however succeeded very well, with much trouble and with the faithful aid of the obliging Balyon, in making out the thread of the affairs from the pieces we recovered and the accounts that were sent in later;

but to recover the money that was lost, and to indicate sources which might cover the deficit, was past our power.

My first visit now was to the widow, who conjured me not to sell her only piece of grass-land and her six milch-cows, or else she and her seven children would fall into the deepest poverty and be forced to come on that same poor-fund for relief, which her dear Pleun had managed so benevolently, though with such inexcusable negligence. I have never been able to see the tears flowing from the eyes of a mother or a widow without having recourse to my handkerchief. I promised to do all I could and went away.

My next visit was to the successor of the deceased. I found him sitting in silence—as was mostly the case—and, to have something to do, gazing at the tiles of the fireplace,—as immovable as if he had to make a copy of the clumsy figures that were burnt into them, or had to learn by heart the *verses* that were on them. He did however neither the one nor the other. I do not even think he *saw* anything, he only *gazed.*

I entered, and forthwith began about the business that brought me there. He looked at me now, and no longer at the tiles. I spoke, he nodded. This encouraged me. But his doing nothing but nod, when I spoke of the poor widow and the seven unhappy children, and his severe countenance never relaxing and his hand never approaching his eye—*that* again discouraged me. I went on however. I tried to convince him that it was impossible for him to avoid paying at least what the Deacons' fund owed; for even were *all* the money that was missing

recovered, there would still remain, owing to the improper liberality of Kortebrand, a pretty large deficit, for which his widow was not accountable. But now Paul Kors nodded no longer, but said quite quietly: "I'm sorry for the woman, but every one must make up their own account. I gave Pleun warning, and I cannot help it." I still spoke for the length of an hour. The man would have listened patiently to me if I had gone on for another hour. But of what use was his patience to me? He did not defend himself, he did not refute me, and his only reply to my most powerful arguments was, "The Dominie must not take it ill of me, but . . ." And so he remained just as I had found him.

My remaining visits were of little more use. Burgomaster Van-der-Zanden assured me of his sincere regret, and advised us above all things not to take legal proceedings against the widow; for the rest, he could not meddle in the business, as it belonged to the Kirk-session. Ploegstaart kept me a whole evening listening to the account of his own prudent management, the year that he was deacon; he promised me however to assist me, if there were others who wished to put an end to the matter. Job Wijsland's wife showed much sincere sympathy, besought me to get the poor creatures clear, and hoped, for the honour of her departed friend, that the townspeople would contribute to pay the *whole* of his debts, especially so shameful a one as this; and this time cousin the Miller perfectly agreed with her. And so it went on.

I called on my venerable friend the Surgeon, and told him all, the sympathy of one and the good wishes

and intentions of another, but also that no one put forth a hand to bring these confused matters into some order.

The old man, who knew more of human nature than of letters, listened to me with the tranquil smile which is characteristic of a comfortable old-age. "My good friend," said he, "you do not yet know the people of this place and their affairs, or else you could have calculated beforehand pretty exactly how each would speak. Paul Kors is cold and surly, but otherwise by no means bad; and moreover he is not altogether wrong; for if he were to pay the old debts, no one would afterwards be inclined to pay *his*. The Burgomaster is kind enough when he is treated with respect; but he too will spare the poor woman for some time, in order to recover some of the arrears of rent, and then he will let others look after what's due to them. Ploegstaart is not the man to settle such a delicate matter to the general satisfaction; and he prefers waiting, as something must be given, till he sees what others do, and then he will do the same. Mrs. Wijsland and the Miller invoke your aid and the general benevolence, because they are among the largest creditors. You may, if you like, go to Baas Perkers, where you'll hear that the departed was a natural man, in the midst of the world, or get from him some passages of Scripture on the uncertainty of the goods of this world . . ."

I am not in general passionate, but I now foolishly interrupted the prudent explanations of my venerable friend by crying out, "Wretched people!" And taking a hasty leave of him I hurried home, and got into my

own room; and with great zeal and warmth I wrote a sermon on *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world* (James i. 27).

The following Sunday I spoke with animation on the subject of true and active Christian love, and the defilements of the world, of which pride and self-interest are not the least. What I had in view glimmered plainly enough through my words, nay it flashed out rather too strongly. Baas Perkers contracted his brow and talked, as he was going out, of building on our own righteousness and of Arminian errors. Some pious persons, who were in good circumstances, thought he was right, and trembled for the weal of the Church; and Van-der-Zanden whispered in the ear of the first Assessor, so as to be heard by about a score of those about him, that such scolding from the pulpit was not proper. Two poor old women shed tears.

The cents were counted. No white money! not even the usual new five-stiver-piece from the Burgomaster.

At noon on Monday I was sitting again with my worthy Surgeon. "It rather grieves me," said hé, "that you ran away in such a hurry on Friday; otherwise I should have advised you to put your sermon yesterday after and not before."

"How is that? They *will* not listen to the Gospel. Nay, they mocked at me designedly by giving less than ever."

"Quite natural. You trod upon the toes of the great folk of the village instead of leading them by the hand

to where you would have them go. But it will be all right, if you have patience and prudence. You'll find more liberality in the end in the congregation, than you did yesterday in the poor-bag."

I adhered closely to the further advice of the old man. I first repaired to the poor widow, and charged her not to dispose of anything of value, much less of land or cattle, without my knowledge, or else her property would be immediately sold by the Guardians. I then repaired to an adjacent village, to the notary Bollaars, who was the lawyer and oracle of the district, and who luckily was an honest man. He managed, as soon as their minds had calmed down a little, to persuade the creditors of the widow Kortebrand, that by gentle dealing most would be got out of the property; so that the woman was left in possession. The Deacons now got back a part of what was gone out of the box, and the creditors of the past year began to press the Session and the relieving-officer so hotly that it was resolved to have recourse to a voluntary subscription, which, through the care of our worthy notary and the good conduct of the creditors, put an end at length to the matter.

When all was concluded and the accounts settled, Heer Bollaars took a glass of wine with me, which I gave him cheerfully and with all my heart, and I said to him, "Hark'ye Mijnheer! now that I have coolly thought over the matter, I see that my sermon on the words of James, of which you may have heard, was rather good, but your application has been infinitely better."

Affairs of the poor! Comprehensive, dreary word! No, reader, I am not yet at the end of my subject. I hope it will not tire you; if it does, console yourself with the reflection that it has tired me infinitely more.

It is not enough that one reaps trouble and ingratitude from the *poor*, of whom one takes charge; not enough that one is involved in all kinds of difficulties through the negligence or obstinacy of the *relieving-officer;* not enough even that one finds how full of reasons every one in the *congregation* is for keeping his purse closed, and how few open it out of any noble principle. The poor are moreover a subject of mutual strife, of envy and of deception; the support of those whom the Lord has left in his place, causes division in his congregations; the poor are flung to and fro like useless luggage, and what is worst of all, right or wrong, he who does *not* provide for the poor is in the eyes of the applauding crowd the best *guardian of the poor*. Hence it is that the relieving of the poor has become an *arena*, not of Christian love and generosity, but of the self-interest, the insolence and the touchiness of the various boards of guardians,—an *arena* in which fraud as well as force is used in the conflict, and where the combatants are enveloped in a cloud of dust, formed of contradictory or dubious usages, agreements, declarations and limitations.

"Ay, ay," said Paul Kors, the acting deacon, "when the Dominie has written that down, then we've done with the widow."

The whole Kirk-session chimed in, "Ay, ay."

But the Dominie required to know first what he was

to write. To tell you the truth I was no way learned in the law; and I do not recollect that in any one of my professorial *dictata*, which I had faithfully preserved that I might consult them on future occasions, there was anything about a *law of* 1818 of *Acts of indemnity* and *domicils of aid.*

I was at this time, though somewhat enlightened with the aid of the Small-Poor-law, enveloped, like the barely visible *nucleus* of a comet, in a mist of ministerial orders and royal decrees. Bollaars the notary, of whom I have already spoken, had been of the utmost service to me by giving me some insight into these matters.

"And what then do you want me to write, Paul?"

"It's true the Dominie knows but little about it. We're talking of the widow Pleunders. Her husband was from Melishoek, and now the officer there is trying to put the widow and children on us; but he shall have them. Ay, ay, if you just write down that."

"But, my friends, had not Pleunders a claim on us, by a residence of more than four years?"

The junior Elder laughed and said, "Ay, ay, *I* took care of that. When three years ago I was relieving-officer, it was for some weeks so very cold, if you remember it. Well, I then asked the man if he was not cold or if he was in want of anything. When he said *yes* I sent him in some turf, without telling him that it was from the poor-fund; for, do you see, I saw what was coming. This was written to Melishoek, and also entered in our books, as *aid in momentary need.* Now they have never liked to pay it, for they knew well what I was at. But by this means we have proofs in our

hands; for according to the law he must have lived here for four successive years *without receiving support*. That cannot fail." As he pronounced the last sentence with a kind of grave emphasis my worthy Elder rubbed his hands and laughed, like one who was on the very best terms with himself.

The other members regarded the man, though they had not now heard it for the first time, with a look of approval and admiration; even the phlegmatic Paul Kors relaxed his features in a sly laugh. I alone took no share in the general admiration.

"I cannot see, my friends," said I, "as our poor-fund is, in ordinary years, in tolerably good condition, any necessity for our forcing this family on the poverty-stricken Melishoek; and relief given without consent or repayment is but a weak proof. I will therefore only write in plain terms how the matter stands, and then some arrangement can be made: or, if necessary, the States can decide. But I tell you beforehand, that I will not tell a lie in the business."

If I had said that I should henceforth decline my stipend, or if I had proposed to have nothing further to do with the affairs of the poor, they could not have regarded me with more bewildered eyes. They hardly comprehended me; and by their cold salute as I was going away, I could see that no one agreed with me.

Two months later a female party were sitting round a well-furnished table at Job Wijsland's. "Well," said Paul Kors's sister, "do you know the news?"

The power of the galvanic-pile is not greater than that of the word *news* on a female assembly. The Miller's

wife—this was some time before the great affair of our Burgomaster's cock—the Miller's wife, I say, put down her ninth cup of coffee, only half finished, that she might not by the sipping impede her hearing. Her sister-in-law held a spoonful of brown sugar motionless over a buttered biscuit. Mrs. Wijsland herself instantly turned the cock of the coffee-pot.

"News!"—"Well, how so?"—"Now, what can it be?"—"Eh, what?"

"It is just then no good news for the poor-box, which has already suffered so much by that affair of Kortebrand's. The widow Pleunders remains on our hands. Paul is beside himself with rage; I never saw him in such a state."

"Well, well! Ay, I knew how it would be. He should have left the Dominie out of the business. That man is too fond of meddling with everything."

"Ay, but the man is not bad: we might have done worse. But he is rather young and innocent in these matters."

"And Ariaan had managed it all so slily. I tell you what, he's too sharp a lawyer. But what will people say? Every *why* has its *wherefore*. Mrs. Pleunders goes regularly to church, and knows how to come over the Dominie's lady. So it's natural that she would rather draw a gulden from Mastland than two quarters of one from Melishoek."

With an approving smile all agreed with the opinion of their entertainer. Even the Miller's wife, who on other occasions was fond of expressing her sentiments, could think of nothing, and so she finished her cup in silence.

The party broke up earlier than usual, as Neeltye Kors had to go and disburden her full-charged mind elsewhere, and each of the guests was impatient to carry the news home. They kissed and took snuff. The door opened, and the vapour of hot people, hot stoves, and hot bread made a way out for itself. On the steps the Miller's wife nodded in her most friendly manner, and called out, "Good-bye till we meet again, cousin!"

We also are to part now. *Good-bye till we meet again, kind reader!*

XIII.

THE DEATH-BED.

"LET us think on it ever so often, and recollect it ever so often, still it remains a most solemn truth: *dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.* We find it in its original simplicity and force proclaimed at the departure from Paradise; and after all the advances of arts and sciences, after all the inventions of civilization to prolong human life and render it agreeable, after all the speculations on the world and on man, on time and eternity, these simple words still retain their power, are still true: *dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.*

"But with the solemnity of this truth the Christian feels but the more the excellence of the Gospel, which has been vouchsafed him. "*To raise the spirit above the dust, and to secure its strength and its repose through a union with the invisible,*"—that is the great aim of the Gospel. Therefore it speaks of *life, eternal life,* which is enjoyed even here, and which is independent of the material life; for "*he who believeth in me,*" says the Saviour, "*shall never die*" (John xi. 26). But, alas! how few conceive this deep sense of the Gospel,—how fewer still enjoy the blessed fruit of it! Of how many is the *life* purely material, so that death is to them the end of all

power and enjoyment. And certainly—without condemning so many thousands and millions of my fellow-men—most take with them from earth but little capacity for a higher sphere of action and for spiritual enjoyments.

"It is certainly gratifying that we are expected and called on when a serious illness may be the forerunner of death; there is, even among the least enlightened, a general desire not to die as the cattle. Even where there is no danger of death, it behoves us to exercise our calling where adversity has preceded us. The word of God also to us is, "*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people*" (Is. xl. 1). And when there is actual danger of death, should we not delight to support our brother in his final struggle, and press his hand when he is parting from us,—from us who have so often spoken to him of that parting and of a better country?

"But in what state do we find the sick when we visit them? For the most part cold and dead in mind, frequently closed against us, only oppressed by pain and the fear of death. I had always thought that those at least *who send for us* had something to say to us or to ask us; but no, they send for us only to provide against the possible event of their death. If they were secure against that danger, they would have little need of our consolations, which, but for this, are too solemn for them. But they are not armed against death; we must therefore prepare them for it, set them at ease respecting it, procure them by our intercession a happy passage;—and all that without opening their hearts to us faithfully, nay, without their having previously sought our friendship, or

taken our words to heart. So at least it is with many. What wonder is it then, that with such persons all kinds of influence of self-constituted visitors of the sick should be at work in opposition to ours, and that the darkest prejudices should bedim the sick-bed on which there had been no spiritual light in days of health!

"And how will it be now?"

Such was my solitary soliloquy, in the second summer which I spent in Mastland, on my lonely way to the Hokkendam, and in melancholy mood I repeated to myself, "How will it be now?" In vain to the right did the pretty blue blossom wave over the soft green flax, and on the other side of the road the heavy stalks of the corn bend; in vain did the lark spring up beside me, and let his cheerful and untiring note be heard aloft in the sky; I passed along as heedless as if it had been a barren heath, and with gloomy emphasis repeated, "How will it be now?"

The day before, at the conclusion of divine service, it was asked of me in the Session, "The Dominie of course is not aware that Leendert Lobel of the Hokkendam is so dangerously ill?"

"No, I knew nothing of it. Of course a strange doctor has been called in."

"Ay, I was right, the Dominie knew nothing of it. His wife was quite annoyed that you had not been there yet."

"My friends, I have told you once for all, and you may tell it everywhere, I will with pleasure visit the sick, even when I am not sent for; the more so as I know

that it is not usually the custom here to send; but I can hardly know every morning if every one in the parish has got up in good health."

I was now on my way to Leendert Lobel's. This man was about fifty years of age, a married man and in good circumstances for one of his rank. I had made acquaintance with him during my round of visiting and at the Communion of his daughter Maaike, but he had rather avoided than sought that acquaintance. He seldom came to church, and beside this I heard him described as a rough careless kind of man, whose former course of life had been even less free than that of his family from coarse excesses. For some time past however both he and they had appeared to lead a more regular life; at least no such out-of-the-way irregularities were heard as heretofore. This man had been attacked seven days ago by a bilious complaint, which had within the last few days turned to a slow nervous fever, and his life was now in imminent danger.

When I reached the dike I was near Lobel's dwelling. His cottage, although not larger than the habitations of other labourers, had a neater and more comfortable appearance than most of them. Maaike was sitting on the threshold darning a stocking, and two younger children were playing with the old dog, heedless of the loss that was impending over them. As soon as they perceived me the dog barked, the children fled back into the house, and Maaike jumped up, and without staying to salute me ran in to give notice of my approach.

When I came in I looked round the little room. At the bedside sat the sick man's wife, with her elbows on

her knees and her face cast down. Before the bed stood a man in the dress of a labourer, and with a gloomy hanging-down head; and in the bed lay the sick man, with the dull pale features and the staring eyes that are often peculiar to this disease. I immediately perceived that I had interrupted a discourse to which the woman was listening with reverence, and which was apparently made by one who *was for the good cause.* I fancied I recognized in him a man belonging to a neighbouring parish, who used at first to come sometimes to hear me, or rather to criticize me. That this man should visit a sick person in his neighbourhood might certainly proceed from a Christian principle, but whether it would be really of advantage to him remained to be seen. Ignorant doctors often make a wound worse.

I followed now, as usual, a practice I had adopted by the advice of Meijerburg, of never conversing at first with the sick person, but with the relations or bystanders; the sick person has then time to recover himself, as our arrival usually discomposes him more or less.

When I had learned from the family some particulars respecting the progress of the disease I asked further, "And how goes it *now?*"

"Ah," said the wife, "it's all still dark. He has no light at all."

Fortunately I was sufficiently initiated in my people's way of thinking and speaking, to perceive that she had passed all at once from the state of his body to that of his soul, and was soon confirmed in this idea by the pious neighbour's saying, "Ay, what is man, so long

as he lies in his sin and God has not laid his hand on him. The sickness here, Neighbour Leen, lasts but a few days, but in hell there is everlasting fire and gnashing of teeth."

These last words were directed to the sick-bed and spoken with a loud voice. The sick man turned his head round slowly, his hollow eye flew wildly round, and a timorous trembling groan rose from his straitened breast.

"And do you feel," went on this unbidden consoler of the sick, "that you are an execrable creature, conceived and born in sin, and that you are going to an angry God? But no, you cannot have a right feeling of that till the Lord opens your heart through his Spirit. Blessed is he whom He has chosen and has made draw near, yea, dwell in his house."

It was not easy to see whether the sick man understood this last address or not. He gazed upwards without ceasing, and one might regard his immovable features as indicatory of stupid indifference or of utter despair.

A reception like this was not very agreeable to me. What had from the beginning been an impediment to me in visiting the sick, grievous as it is, was in my way here also. It was my wish to be always alone with sick persons, for then they could open their heart with perfect freedom, and we could learn what was required and speak accordingly, instead of wandering without an object among general ideas, and be continually repeating mere truisms. As it now is we often cannot say what we should, would, and ought to say to that sick person and to him alone. And if it were only the nearest relations, those who with

heartfelt interest daily attend on and console the sick, and who now wish to join with us in prayer for them; members of their household acquainted with their way of life and of thinking, their faults and their virtues! . . . But frequently neighbours and acquaintances crowd in uninvited, precisely when they were expecting the Minister or saw him entering; or else those who are in the odour of sanctity come to weigh our words in the gold-scales of orthodoxy, as being old and approved visitors of the sick, who know exactly when we may give comfort and how one should die. Nay, it was no rare thing for me—when the sick person was generally known and lived in the village—to find it difficult to get near the bed for the crowd. Who, that will not make mere idle quackery of his noble office,—who, that has any feeling of what passes between man and his Creator in the last conclusive hours, —who can under such circumstances freely exhort, console, strengthen, in exact accordance with the dictates of his heart? Who can faithfully pray with and for the afflicted, as a brother goes to his father with a brother who is in distress, when he knows that his words are eagerly caught up in order to be carried about as news in the village? that the language of his heart shall be tested by strangers, by the general opinion respecting the sick person, or shall be measured by the standard of the strictest doctrine?

But we will return to Leendert Lobel. I saw that I must try to avoid disagreeable collisions, but at the same time not quit the field with a short and feeble address; this I was bound to do, not only for the honour of my calling, but for the essential well-being of the poor man.

afflicting, but in order to save; that he therefore should not groan and lament as being hopeless, which was of no avail, but think seriously of his former sinful life, confess it and bewail it, since there is forgiveness even for the lost son, provided *he arise and go to his Father*. He seemed to understand all this very well. His eye lightened up, and he looked at me more calmly. Then there passed again a dark cloud over his countenance, and he groaned, "Oh, if I could believe that!"

"And why can you not believe it, when you know it is true?—But I will tell you the reason of it.—When you were in health you rarely attended on divine service, and now you are terrified at the idea of God and death, and some people, like your neighbour just now, make you still more terrified. He does it, no doubt, with a good intention, but he gives you little help. It is Christ you want, my friend, and not the Devil; Heaven, and not Hell; and I am come to announce Christ to you as a Saviour of sinners, who opens Heaven even for those who have gone furthest astray."

The woman now took part in the conversation for the first time: "Ay, the Dominie may say what he will, but *I* wish Leen were as good in himself as our neighbour."

"I say nothing against him, my good woman, for I do not know him; he may be very much at ease and very honest in himself. All I say is that he is not a good comforter for your husband."

"Ay, ay, it's always the way. He has often told me how he himself was dragged along the edge of Hell, and for three days and three nights lay struggling on the

ground before he got any light for his soul. But then at last the Lord Jesus said to him, 'Thou art a sheep of my pasture.' That is a great privilege: the Dominie cannot deny that."

What was the use of contradicting her? I therefore merely said, "Once more, my good woman, I judge not your neighbour; but the way of the one is not the way of the other. Your husband is sick and weak, and mayhap may not live three days and three nights. Immediate aid and consolation is therefore required here. He must reconcile himself with God, he must pray, he must resign himself to Christ. If he gets any better, we shall then see by his conduct if his conversion is real. Give then an example yourself. You can still act, your husband can only pray."

"Ay, if he could do *that!*"

While we were talking thus the poor man's eye had sunk again. As it appeared to me, he had not been able to follow the crowd of conflicting ideas, but understood enough of what his wife said to fall back into his former state of stupid uncertainty. I too sat for a moment silent, gloomy, and dejected. How was I, who had so little influence over the poor man, to raise him up in a few visits, when he was pressed down alternately by a superwise neighbour and a foolish woman?

I now called to mind a lesson of the worthy Meijerburg's, with whom I had lately conversed on this very subject. "As soon as you perceive," said he, "that you cannot speak any longer usefully at a sick person's, then pray. The heart which is closed against man opens at times to God. Besides, there is less difference of opi-

nion respecting prayer; and at the sick-bed I shun religious differences as the plague."

After a few minutes silence I therefore said, "Lobel, should we not have some prayer?"

He gave me a fixed stare. His rigid features then gradually relaxed; he nodded, raised his arms from under the bed-clothes, took off his cap and folded his hands.

"Come, I will pray for you and with you, but you need not repeat the words after me. Listen only in silence and follow them with your heart."

He nodded again and closed his eyes firmly. I then prayed. I shall not repeat what I said, in fact I could not; all I know is that I prayed with the utmost energy and sincerity, for I had been deeply moved by all that had preceded. Tears stood therefore in my eyes; I most earnestly desired to made the poor man feel the consoling presence of God, as far as in me lay, and, where I was myself unable to provide for his spiritual wants, to commit him to the Divine mercy. He might, perhaps, if his feelings were thus awakened and his faith in Christ determined, take in and retain something, which, though what people said might weaken it, could not take it totally away. I could also see that he was joining in prayer; with his rough hand he brushed away a tear and then pressed mine. Even the wife thanked me, in a gentler tone than heretofore, for my "precious prayer." I recommended the man to think and pray rather than to confuse his mind with much talking, and then took my leave.

As I was at the Hokkendam I thought I might as well call on Arij Ploegstaart. I had seen but little of

him since the adventure of the cock with all its consequences, and I had now, without seeking it, an object with which no Burgomaster or Burgomaster's cock had anything to do. He was standing at the dike, and he led me, with his usual good-nature, into his house, murmuring and grumbling at my long absence. When we were seated, my mouth soon ran over with what my heart was so full of, and I told him about the sick man and the self-invited comforter, whose-return I feared would quickly pull down what I had with difficulty tried to build up. "So!" replied Arij. "Was that scamp there? He is rather a little fellow, with reddish hair?"

"Yes, but still he is a pious man. Though his notions may perhaps be rather rigid, that does not make him a scamp."

"Dominie, take my word for it, you may be a learned man, but you do not know the people of the dike here. This *red* Teun—he is so called for shortness, his real name is Teunis Raapland—was formerly one of the greatest of deceivers, and has thus brought many women into evil courses. He may now be said to be converted. It may be true that he was one time somewhat afraid of Hell, and that he dreamed that our Blessed Lord had been his help in it; but it is also true that last year he stole from me four bushels of potatoes. That, by my soul, is not the act of a true Christian, or else my name's not Arij Ploegstaart."

"If that be true, you are quite right. But what takes such a man to the dying man's? They seem to have great faith in him. The husband was visibly disturbed by what he said, and the wife assented to every-

thing. I had not the least idea she would do so: I thought she knew nothing of either God or religion."

"Yes, we might have thought so; but listen, and I'll tell you more. Leen has been always rough and careless, but otherwise a good sort of fellow, who should have had another guess kind of woman. But the wife —she was formerly very great with our Teun, as all the dike knows; her husband alone would never believe it was so bad as that. When Teunis was converted, there was of course an end of that matter, but for some months past he goes there again,—of course to convert Lobel and his wife. He has made good way with her. Now if Lobel should *die in the Lord*, they are all three in luck; for Teun is poor and lazy, and she will be glad to have a younger husband. It is only those poor things, the children, that will be then to be pitied. You see now the piety and the plans of both parties, and there's the end of it."

"Ploegstaart, Ploegstaart! I certainly do not know the people here as well as you; but do you not judge rather hardly?"

"Time will show, Dominie."

These last words, pronounced in a triumphant tone, formed the conclusion of Arij's reasoning. We then passed to other subjects, and an hour later I moved homewards in rather a pensive mood.

Two days after I visited the sick man again. I entered, and saw Teunis Raapland and the wife in nearly the same position as before; but Maaike, who was by no means a bad girl, was standing by the bed and sobbing audibly, and a boy of fifteen and two younger children,

who had at last, from seeing Maaike's tears, comprehended their melancholy state, sat on the ground crying. A couple of neighbours were also standing in the middle of the room, and two women were seated motionless at the table.

While I was outside I had heard the well-known disagreeable voice; it ceased when I entered. They made room for me and offered me a seat. I was affected by the awful change in the appearance of the sick man. His face had fallen in and gotten the yellow hue of a corpse, his eyes were wide open, as also was his mouth, and his breathing was intermittent, deep and sobbing, indicating the near approach of death.

"Your husband is much worse," said I in a tone of feeling.

"Yes" was the reply. "The Master too says that today will see the end of it."

"And has he remained tranquil since I left him? has he been sensible all this time?"

"Tranquil, well, I cannot exactly say that. It is not so easy for a person to be so. Inwardly, I believe, he has sometimes some troubles with himself. He does well if he prays and weeps, but then again sometimes he won't hear of it. Is it not so, neighbour Teunis?"

"Ay, what shall I say? The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."

The sick man gave a shrill cry. Neighbour Teunis came nearer to him; but he turned his head away with evident aversion.

A dismal light now rose to me. The poor dying man was at the same time terrified with dreadful images of

the future, while looking back on the past he was tortured with jealousy and aversion. He dreaded his words, he dreaded the man himself still more, and had no longer any defence against either.

"Friends," said I, "be so good as to make way a little. If I am standing alone at the bedside, the sick man will know me more readily."

They made room for me.

I stood straight before him. His eye-strings appeared to be broken. I said pretty loud, "Leendert," do you still know me?" He made no answer, but slowly folded his hands, and tried to take off his cap, but he—the robust labourer a few days before—he was no longer able to do it.

It was however quite plain to me that he understood me, and still more so that I had not *prayed* to no purpose the day before yesterday. I went on: "We should pray, pray briefly, and God hears us when we pray. Do you know that?" He seemed as if he wished to nod, but his head fell back.

I now prayed in brief, broken terms, slow and loud. I heard and saw no one. The dying man was all in all to me, as if I were dying with him. When I had said Amen, I asked him, "Have you understood me? and do you believe that? Say then nothing but Amen."

He panted louder and in a more broken manner. His eye moved, first towards me and then upwards. Deep from the throat came the hollow sound *Aa* . . . but tongue and lips remained inflexible; he gave one heavy groan, and was no more.

A year after this Maaike Lobel rang my bell. When she came in, she begged me to publish her certificate next day.*

"How, Maaike," said I, "are you going to leave us?"

"Yes, Dominie. Oh, it would never have happened if my good father had lived!"

The good girl wept bitterly.

"Oh," she proceeded a minute or two after; "if you but knew what we have suffered from our second father! As for me, it does not signify, I can go to service; my brother too will soon be worth his diet; but my sister, and above all the poor little Leendert, who is so delicate! I would, for their sake, have remained at home, but I can stand it no longer. I cannot, I may not tell you all the . . ."

Arij Ploegstaart was right enough. The family of Teunis Raapland is at this hour one of the most unhappy in my parish.

* When a person is leaving a parish a certificate of character is given by the Minister, which is to be delivered to the Minister of the other parish, and information of the granting and receiving of the certificate is to be given on Sunday after the sermon in each church.

XIV.

CATECHIZING.

I HAD seen, for the second time in Mastland, the high-piled loads of hay drawn in, and then the harvest of the cornland collected; finally the digging out of the potatoes brought to mind the winter with its requirements and its supplies, its toils and its repose. Now then was the time to resume with renewed vigour the catechizing, which had partly ceased even in the spring and had slowly died out in the summer. I had, indeed, with the Synodal decree in my hand, and my heart full of youthful zeal, tried to keep it alive; but all my scholars, but the smallest school-children, were gone into the fields, and some few that remained had run away out of spite at being left alone, or thought it but fair that I should partake of the general relaxation. When harvest came I sat alone in the church on the second Tuesday.

This storm was now over, and one quicker than another my scholars came back; some however stayed at home for a special summons, and thus eked out somewhat the vacation. At length the sheep were all together, and the shepherd had to consider how he should feed them.

In the course of the summer I had frequently thought on this subject, and spoken on it with some of my bro-

ther-clergymen, and had now maturely weighed and considered everything. And though there still remained many difficulties, I had at least learned to see more and more into the great importance of separate instruction. I have always loved the child-like, simple spirit of the Gospel. What other religion has ever taken upon it the bringing up from childhood of the whole man? What does Heathenism teach man? Idle fables and still idler gesticulations, by which the child never has become a human being. What was the education of children even among God's chosen people, tied to a wearisome ceremonial, which committed study and intercession to the sacerdotal caste? What is it now with the unbelieving Jewish nation? Nay, what is it in the Church of Rome, where the chief lesson taught to children is a blind faith and an unlimited obedience to the doctrines and precepts of a dominant Church?

But we alone, directed by the pure light of the Gospel, we alone receive the little ones from the hand of parents and teachers, to form them into independent beings, voluntary believing Christians and religious men. They can speak, we are to teach them to pray. They can read, we have to make them readers of the Bible. They think, they feel, they desire, and while all the powers of the human soul are developed in them, sin also is awakened, and we, we are to govern them by light and truth, to form their young hearts by love, and direct their desires toward a better world, in order to arm them against the temptations of this. It is not alone *instruction* in the restricted sense, it is *religious training* that is the task assigned us. If we cannot do this perfectly in those

few hours and among so many, we must at least do what we can, and if we are so fortunate as to have the parents co-operating with us, the work is already half done.

The long period of instruction with us, as distinguished from that of the Roman Catholics, and in a great measure from that of the old Lutheran Church, is in accordance with the idea of *religious training*. If nothing more were required than *instruction* in the most necessary truths, it would be quite enough if children learned diligently till they were twelve or thirteen; indeed I have observed that many after that age made little more progress in mere *learning*. But the *training* is not by any means completed at that age; a great deal of what they have learned has been merely taken into the memory; not maturely considered and estimated at its real value; the character is not yet formed, the choice of life has not yet been made. There might be less harm in this if a dominant Church continued to instruct her members as children still; *we* receive *children* as scholars, but when they leave us they must be *men*. So much is possible, they may have a proper notion of religion, of its truth and its value, and a firm resolution *to lead a holy, sober and godly life in this present world, as true members of the society of which Christ is head.* The *training* may well be said to be complete of him who will devote himself to Christ wholly and for ever; for, as our Saviour himself said (Luke xiv. 28–30), he is a mere fool who builds a tower before he is in a condition to calculate whether he shall be able to bring his work to a conclusion or not.

You have here some of my ideas on this part of our task, enough to teach us to take heed, nay to fear to act

contrary to it. This last was literally the case with myself, when I began the work. Even in this respect I had experience of what I wrote above. "Our universities are well adapted to form theologians, but they do not form teachers. These form themselves or are formed by their people afterwards." How in fact could one learn in a college the way to teach children, the children of country-people? Where is an ordinary instructor formed? Is it at school? And should then the instruction that we are to give be easier to learn? We have to teach such important truths, and not alone to teach but to imprint and stamp them on the heart; our catechizing must moreover be open to all ranks and all ages; the sensible and well-taught child as well as the stupid peasant-boy, the polished youth as well as the unreflecting servant-maid, the philosopher or the free-thinker as well as the neglected grossly ignorant old man or woman, are to be, through our instruction and guidance transformed into true Christians, *ready always to give an answer for the reason of the hope that is in them* (1 Pet. iii. 15). And now while the instructor of children, and usually of a very restricted class of children, has been exercised in the school of another, before he began as such on his own account, what has been done to form us in this respect?—With shame I write the word, but defects must be observed and pointed out, if we are to hope for improvement—NOTHING. We were certainly taught the knowledge that we are to teach others, and provided we make use of it, sufficiently too, well and thoroughly taught; but what carpenter was ever formed by the mere knowledge of measures and of tools, and what gardener

by that of botany? I know that a worthy Professor, now gone to his rest after his long labours, used to exercise his students in catechizing on the orphans; but in other colleges, as far as I know, this was not the case. Besides, it was merely a partial discharge of a great duty. A single catechizing held under the eye of a Professor and fellow-students is perhaps enough to give an idea of the matter, but nothing more. Why in our Church does the student become all at once a preacher, the pupil a teacher? Why is there not a certain kind of chaplaincy held as in the Church of Rome? And if this cannot be, why are not the older divines made to act in a wider sphere in our seats of learning? Of a truth thousands of heathens roam about the streets, and this not least in that celebrated seat of learning, Leyden. It would be impossible for the ministers, even with the best will, to provide for every need. What a wide field were here to be found for labouring usefully under their inspection or that of an experienced catechizer! I believe that this would be greater than people perhaps fancy. It might produce good fruit for the instructor, for the *whole* of his future ministry; and it also might preserve those who were instructed from further debasement and brutalization, and teach the parents to estimate more highly the student who took an interest in their children. It might perhaps also cause the profession of *Teacher of Religion* to be more respected, when future ministers worked with them, especially if this could be extended to other large towns,—and how the fields there also are white unto harvest!

But I must leave my ideas to be judged of by more

qualified persons; I shall only add that already, without any peculiar obligation, the probationers in one of our seats of learning have devoted themselves to the instruction of the poor, and the Synod also—as I have learned while writing this Sketch—is desirous of employing in this spirit the abundance there is of probationers. May it not remain merely consisting of single exceptions and half-measures!

But pardon my digression for the sake of the importance of the subject. I return to the manse and the people of Mastland.

As I did not come in till May, it was then out of the question to think of catechizing. The *continuing* of it during the summer would be strange enough in the eyes of my flock, but the *beginning* it in summer would be regarded by them as madness. The year following I addressed my scholars from the pulpit, at first entirely in the old tradition-way, and at the appointed hour I gave my presence in the vestry-room.

The first week gave me but little trouble. I had of course to make acquaintances, to take down names, to examine the books that were used, and to give out the lesson for the next time.

The following week I was to give instruction for the first time. I had to begin with the bigger girls. As they had previously used different catechisms, and consequently some change was to be made, I had at once done away with *The Compendium*, Hellenbroek, etc. etc., and I confined myself to Egeling's catechism. His Scriptural language, but more especially the union of history and doctrine in one small book, and the tracing

of a gradually developed divine revelation, decided me in its favour.

The girls were seated, so also was I. I prayed, they were silent; I put questions, they repeated their answers. This was done, with downcast eyes, and at full gallop; you could not distinguish a single comma or period in what was uttered, the very words ran together into one mass of sound; and hence the colour of the girl that was repeating was always somewhat higher than that of the rest; and if the answer was at all long, her colour rose still higher.

"My girl," said I to the fourth, "the others have answered very well, and you would no doubt do the same; but you must speak slower, more quietly, or else I shall not understand you, and you will not understand yourelf."

She began: "I learn"—here she grew red; again, "I learn"—here she was as red as scarlet. She then could keep no longer to the slow mode of speaking, and away she galloped, harder by far than any of the others, through her answer to the end. "Ilearnfromthecreationthatgod isgreatwiseandgoodandimusthonourandlovehim." She stopped, panting.

To spare the others this painful and useless effort, I let the rest of the class go through the lesson without making any further remarks. I saw there was no use in going any further, though there were several girls still remaining.

But I attached little value to the whole repetition. What did this mechanical act of memory avail for the true knowledge of religion, where all should tend to the enlightening of the mind, and more especially to the

forming of the heart? I would teach to think and feel, and not merely to repeat. Nay, I was on the very point of doing away altogether with this system of question and answer, but luckily I was prudent enough to defer it a little.

"Girls," said I, "you have answered very well, but the main point is that you should understand what you have said. You should see to that yourselves. We will therefore say something more on this first lesson. I shall question you; what you do not know I shall tell you, and if there is anything you do not understand, you may without fear ask me to give you a clear explanation of it."

A general silence.

"What is there at the head of this lesson? Let one for all read it out once more."

You might have heard a pin drop.

"Don't be afraid . . . Come, I shall read it for you then: INTRODUCTION—WHEREIN IS SHOWN HOW GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF TO MAN FOR HIS SALVATION. What is *reveal?*"

A painful silence for a minute.

"Come Matty, or you Molly,—what is the meaning of God's revealing himself, making himself known to man? Don't you understand that?"

I laid some emphasis on these last words, and the result was that Matty's and Molly's necks also grew red, but the mouths of both were still fast closed.

Nothing remained but for me to answer the question myself and go on; so I worked through the explanation of the first question and came to the second. "*This know I,* that is to say, that I derive my origin from God,

from the contemplation of the world and from the Bible. —Peggy Wijsland, what is that, *the contemplation of the world?*"

This young girl had inherited some of her mother's confidence; she was the first who ventured to say a word that was not in her book, and she answered stoutly enough, "It is God."

Oh me! For this I was not prepared. I had familiarized myself with all sorts of definitions of the matters that were to be brought forward, and anticipated all the objections that could be raised, and the questions that might be put to me; but this stiff-necked silence lay quite out of my calculation, and when now at last a word was spoken, that one word sufficed to show me that they had not understood a particle of my questions.

I looked at my watch; it was not yet half-past ten. Still a wearisome half-hour!

I cannot recollect now how I got through that half-hour. All I remember is, that I was myself nearly as much perplexed with the case as my scholars, that my tone grew sharper and more severe, as is usually the case when we find ourselves in a straitened disagreeable position, and that there were wanting five minutes of the half-hour when I could no longer think of ideas, questions or answers, and I concluded with a prayer that was almost merely mechanical.

When I got home the first word I said was, "Now, Cornelia, it is a common saying that women's tongues are always in motion like the leaves of an aspen—I have proof positive that that's a slander."

My wife laughed, and pointed to a group in front of

the manse. As I live it was my late automatons, but now chattering away, laughing and romping; they were saying how troublesome the new Dominie was, and how he made distinctions, for he had put out some and had not let them repeat with the rest.

And so the business went on. The boys had somewhat more courage, but understood even less than the girls. It was rather better with the children. I could speak more freely and in their own way to children, whom besides I was always fond of; and they themselves possessed more natural confidence; nay, some of them even ventured to ask me questions, as "Why did not Abel get out of Cain's way? and, where did Cain get a wife?" And I may say that it was with these, the smartest of the children, that I began to catechize in a tolerable way. Thus a few peasant-boys of ten years were to teach me what no Professor had taught me!

When, in the beginning of the second winter, I looked back on the preceding one, I found that I was myself to blame in a great measure for the many painful and wearisome hours I had passed; but it was owing to ignorance, and not to wilfulness—I had begun with *questioning* when I should have begun with *instructing*, especially where there was such universal strangeness and perplexity; and I had wanted them *to reason*, instead of merely *repeating*.

This last, as I began more and more to perceive, was the main fault in my first catechizings. We theologians have our heads full of abstract ideas; first the definition, then the proof and defence, next drawing the conclusion, and so all ends right and well. But our scholars

have no ears for all this. Whatever is abstract is foreign to them; and it is altogether needless to *prove* a truth of religion to them; they always *believe* what they are taught. All then that is to be done is to give them a vivid, lively idea of religion, and to place this idea strongly before their imagination first, and then before their heart and understanding. We must treat nearly all, and not the least ignorant old people, just as children, only we must be a little more serious with the aged; and I can assert with truth that children have taught me how I should instruct the grey-headed to make them also enter the kingdom of Heaven as little children.

The more I gradually learned to discern this, the more I felt the supreme value of the Bible, which is at once the most learned and the most popular of books; and most of all the supreme wisdom of the Saviour himself, who, by his startling remarks, by apparently singular and paradoxical expressions, but above all by significant acts and narratives, knew how to make the abstract attractive and the spiritual sensible. I now studied the Old and New Testament, from this point of view. I made myself familiar anew with that history and that figurative language and above all with the simple *naïf* mode of expression in the Old Testament, and endeavoured to imitate and apply it whenever I could.

Thus furnished I commenced the second winter of my catechizing. I had still however a deal of trouble. Even my mode of instruction was as yet very far from being what, according to my views, it ought to be. It is with a vivid conception of it, and not out of vain self-glorification, that I will now give a slight sketch of my

present mode of teaching, in order that the reader may be able to follow me everywhere, even there where less fame is to be had than in the pulpit, but where it is of infinitely more advantage to give edification.

I have then divided my scholars in the following manner:—The children under twelve years come all together. These belong for the most part to the school, and there is no need to separate the boys and girls at this age. The girl also when a child, has confidence; but as soon as she leaves school female reserve is gradually developed. From that time forth they are separated even when with me. But a boy or girl of twelve years is ill matched with one of eighteen or twenty; the former does not think of any profession of religion or choice for his future mode of life, and small scholars are by their playfulness a hindrance to the bigger ones, and the presence of these is annoying and oppressive to the small boys. For this reason my scholars of fifteen or sixteen are passed to another catechizing-class where they remain till the period of their profession. Old people are of course instructed apart, and the men are always if possible separated from the women.

When I had formed my plan and had carefully hunted up all the missing scholars I thought on something further. What were they to do? Learn questions? This is certainly not what is best; for them the reading of some well-written work, a regular examination of the Bible, would be much better. But who would? who could do this? Who could get any one to help him at home? Certainly nineteen out of twenty could not; what the twentieth was to do I will not determine. They

must then do the only thing they can and will do, *learn questions.* If they know them—and this applies still more to country-people than to those of towns—they would have an inducement the more to come and say their lessons, which had cost them so much labour; especially as no one is now excluded. I afterwards made an exception to this rule in the summer-catechizing, which I at length succeeded in with much trouble and with but few scholars. A chapter of the Bible was read by the scholars and explained by me. I can for various reasons recommend this method from experience. People will then perhaps see more clearly why it is that the Bible is less read that it used to be. It is not always unwillingness, many can no longer do it, at least not to any good effect.

But to return to my ordinary catechizing. *Coming* and *saying* was something no doubt, but the next was more difficult, to make them *listen* and *speak.* A certain degree of approximation seemed to me to be the first requisite; and with great effort and patience I have so modified my tone that their awe of my person is greatly diminished, and the dull brains are no longer made more obtuse. I walk about among the forms, especially where the children are, and I chat with one, and laugh with another, as far as the requisite degree of dignity permits. But I have particularly made it my study to acquire the peculiar expressions of the peasantry; for they have their own dialect, so that all Dutch is not Dutch for them. Some of their terms in religious matters—the reader may have remarked them here and there in these Sketches —are even natural and correct. They may be adopted

without our becoming too rude and rustic; and besides, this fault needs less to be avoided in private instruction than in the pulpit.

And now for instruction, properly so called. It is and should be, like the Bible itself, chiefly historical. Are not in fact the principal, perhaps all doctrinal and moral truths at the same time historical truths? and those which do not seem to be such, are they not brought in the Bible into inevitable connection with the history. *History of the past* are the eternity and perfection of God, the creation, providence, atonement, the conversion and the faith of the early Christians, which are an example for us; *history of the present* is human life about and in us, with all its blessings and all its cares, with the traces of the image of God, and above all the mournful ravages of sin in man; and *history of the future* is again the eternity and unchangeable faith of God, the glory of Christ and his kingdom, death, resurrection, the last judgement and the perfect bliss of the Christian. He who knows this history well and firmly believes it, and who knows moreover how to adduce a Scriptural example for every duty and every prayer which he follows with all his heart—is he likely to want for his formation for a higher life so many of those abstract ideas, philosophic definitions and complete demonstrations? Not that I am adverse to them; let those who can comprehend them do so; but my Mastland scholars can do no such thing.

I had now got so far as to have the ears of nearly all, and the mouths of some opened for me. But I wanted something more. I was not content with these single

speakers among so many mutes, though far higher assemblies in this resemble my catechizing. I longed to hear the voice of all, and after much cogitation I thought of the following plan.

It is not every one that has sufficient clearness of memory to be quite at home in what they had previously learned, nor the requisite confidence to express their own ideas; or perhaps the cause may rather be that religious ideas are too strange to them for them to find words to express them. I resolved therefore to repeat first myself what I intended to ask them, and this succeeded. They listened better, out of fear of missing presently after; they answered better, even though they showed by only a single word that they had understood me; and at the repetition in a succeeding week, which I hardly ever omit, one part or another of it usually adheres to them.

For example.

It is once more nine o'clock on Tuesday morning; but my girls and myself are quite different from what we were four years ago. I am not by any means so gravely attired, and as they come in I nod a good-morrow to one or other of them as old acquaintances; and they venture to look me in the face and answer my question of, How is all at home?

After a proper prayer we begin:

"Now, girls, we shall see who is best able to say the lesson without stammering. She who learns the questions best gets a good mark to her name, and she that can tell anything at once, two; and the good marks gain prizes in due time. You know it by last winter. So take care."

These are girls of from twelve to sixteen; this is no longer the way with those that are older.—The lesson is said. I proceed.

"Well now we have once more made a beginning: *for all things have a beginning and an end.*—Mind now! I have just said that, but can any one tell me if there is anything or any one who has neither beginning nor end?"

Two voices at once: "God."

"Quickly answered. God has had no beginning and He will have no end either. We therefore cannot properly say how old God is; for we cannot count His years. Do you understand? Count now backwards; ten—a hundred—a thousand—ten thousand years—and we are not at it yet, God is much older. But no one else is as God.

"But all things in the world, they have a beginning and an end. This book had a beginning, for men began to write and to print it; and the trees in the churchyard have had a beginning, for they were planted; and the church, for it was built; and yourselves too, all of you, for you were born. But now for something else. The sun and the moon and the whole world, have they been always? Yes or no."

"Yes." "No." "No." "No."

"Now one at a time. Those who cried *No* were right. Most certainly the sun and the moon and the world have not been always. The great God was once alone, quite alone, and then *He* thought: for He can do what He wills; —then He thought, 'I will make a beautiful heaven with angels in it, and then a great world with men upon it,

and I shall bestow much good on men and angels, and then they surely will worship me duly.' And as God thought so did He. He made the world, and out of what? . . .

"Come, does no one know that? Well, I'll lay a wager you know it. A carpenter made this table of—?"

"Of wood."

"Right. And a mason built this church with—?"

"With lime and stone."

"Right again. And God made the world—out of what?"

"Out of nothing."

"Very well. And therefore we say, 'God *created* the world,' but we never say, 'The carpenter created this table.' And how God created everything, what first and what last, that we read in the Bible, in the beginning. I will relate it to you regularly. Mind you listen, for what I am asking you *now* is only between ourselves, in order to make you attentive; but by-and-by I shall ask you, one after the other, each in her turn, all that I shall have related to you. You know that of old.

"Imagine to yourselves how it looked here six thousand years ago. There was as yet no Mastland, no country-people, no cows, nothing at all; there was not even any ground on which man or beast could stand, and no sun to help us to see . . ."

But enough for a specimen. I must however repeat that my ideal, even in this respect, was far above my practice. I was not always equally well-toned, equally clear and quick, equally interested in the subject on which I was to speak; and it was not always that I had

—what I esteem of great importance, if it were only for a few minutes—*studied* my catechizing. Of this, however, I can assure the reader, who is only used to associate with the cultivated and the learned, that this tone had nothing irreverent or disagreeable for my auditors; and even old people listened with the utmost seriousness and devotion when I adopted a still lower tone than what I will or might employ in a printed work. The ridiculous is only where there is felt to be a contrast between the elevation of the matter and the meanness of the language; but that contrast is not felt, and does not even exist, when the language is on a level with the ideas and the imagination of those to whom it is addressed.

XV.

POVERTY.

EVERY creature that God has made is pleased to see its fellow. Be you a philosopher or a merchant's clerk, a wig-maker or a peasant, a preacher or a sailor, in short, be what you will, you will feel your heart beat when for the first time after a long interval you talk to *one of the same trade*. Nay, I actually believe that nothing can be more agreeable for a misanthropist than to meet a misanthropist like himself.

It was therefore a pleasant day for me when, about the middle of February, one of my college-friends took it into his head to make me a visit. I had now nearly reached the end of my second *winter in the country*. During the latter weeks, owing to the pressure of occupation and the badness of the roads, I had rarely quitted the village, and had hardly received any visits. My town-relations were waiting for the pleasant month of May or one of its successors. My friend Altorf ventured on the journey, in which there was really little to be ventured by one who was not to be deterred by a short but rather fatiguing walk.

It was a charming day of February, one of those few summer days which the old popular faith claims of this month and which it seldom refuses. The sun was shin-

ing not strong but bright; one could look him straight in the face. His beams softened the hard frozen crust of the clayey roads, without penetrating through it, and made the ice moist but not brittle.

I set out on my way to the nearest ferry, in order to meet my friend, while my best Cornelia was preparing a good and substantial entertainment for the weary traveller. As I was going along the sandy path, which ran by the side of the winding dike, everything seemed to me alike cheering and elevating; the pure, fresh, and still not too cold air, the trees that were slowly shaking off in tears of joy their icy attire, the workman who was joyously cutting boughs and binding them in fagots, from the coppice along the dike, and the high-situated ferry-house, which now from the right, now from the left, seemed to hold out to me a cheerful reception.

Without being tired or looking at my watch—a thing that, with me at least, is seldom a good sign—I arrived at the tavern. A short causeway leads from it down to the river. At the commencement of this causeway, up above on the dike, there is, according to an old custom, a post with three flat wooden arms, on which the traveller can see whence he is come and whither the way will take him. One of these arms points with five gigantic outstretched fingers toward the river, and on it may be read, by any one who can read half-obliterated letters, *To Rotterdam.*

I lighted a cigar at the landlord's, and strolled down the causeway to the cottage of the ferrymen. These people are—and it is well for them—peculiarly qualified for idleness as well as for work. While they are

sitting on a bench with their muscular arms sustaining their heads, one can discern in their features no more passion than weariness, nay, hardly even any life. They reserve all their exertion for the water, and, just like the turtles, come up on the land merely to rest themselves or to bask in the sun.

The river was running seawards calmly and tranquilly, carrying along the collected waters of the Swiss Alps. They looked peaceful and friendly, like a conqueror after the exertions of the contest; three weeks ago they had cast off their fetters, overcome the resistance of a piled-up mass of ice, and conquered their freedom.

Right opposite the causeway on which I was standing there was on the opposite bank just such another. There was also a dike from which the descending causeway advanced, and an ancient finger-post, but no ferry-house, not even a hut where one could take shelter from a storm or a heavy fall of rain. Instead of this there was only a high pole with a rope and an old basket on it. The traveller, whose voice is not strong enough to make itself heard on the other side of the river, or is drowned by the wind or the dashing of the waves, can haul up the basket and thus make a signal; and if he is so lucky as that the ferrymen see it, he is taken over.—On my word, there comes one, just of the height and size of Altorf, as it appears, down the causeway! He is taking his valise from the guide. He has signalled with the old Dutch telegraph, and the man has earned his money. Look there! just before my feet the boat is putting off from the bank, and the guide takes off his hat and departs. As a Dutch guide bows according to what he

has got in his hand, from the profoundness of his bow I can make a good guess at the liberality of my friend.

At every stroke of the oars the boat shot a piece of the way, quivering and shaking through the waves; it took the traveller in on the other side; and in a few minutes Altorf pressed my hand with the genuine warmth of a collegian.

There is a pleasant confusion in the first conversation with an old acquaintance whom one has not seen for some *months*. If it is merely *days*, the collected treasure of questions and details is not so very large; if it is *years*, we never have this treasure ready set in order, we know not where to begin, we have lost the old free manner of speaking, and look at each other somewhat confused and half estranged; but after *weeks*, and still more after *months*, what a delightful chaos of questions, and narratives and exclamations! Just now, in the middle of an account of a death,—"Well, William, what's that you're looking at?" And then again while we are talking seriously of our excellent professors,—"But John, are you able to keep your feet on this slippery road?"

But a minute account would only weary the reader, though we, as we went along and talked, never thought of being wearied. I prefer then making him a witness of our conversation in the evening, which was conducted more calmly and more consecutively.

I. Well, now, John, how goes it? Are you to be a probationer this year at last?

Altorf. At last! why yes, if it's not too soon. I'm fond of study, and of being at the university, and I work cheerfully at my dissertation; but I hardly feel myself

ripe enough for being a probationer, and still less for being a country-clergyman.

I. It is possible enough, Altorf. We have talked a good deal about it. But I am still of opinion that you will never be so if you remain at college.

Altorf. How is that, William?

I. I'll tell you. You seek for everything by studying, and there certainly is much to be got by it, but not all. You know we were once nearly on a par in knowledge. But independence and better means have placed at your disposal more than at mine books and time, those mighty levers of learning, and you are now far ahead of me. I am no longer able to enumerate the heretics of the first centuries, without fear of stumbling, and would scarcely venture my Latin in a professor's course. And yet I have for a couple of years held a course, in which I am far ahead of you—among the sick and the poor, in house-visiting and in the Kirk-session, and among my scholars. That is what you cannot do in Leyden or Utrecht. You must therefore, my friend, become a freshman* whether you will or no, just as it is impossible to train any one in such a way for the university that he will not be at first a freshman. The practice of the freshman giving a treat may be abolished, but not so the fact of his being one.

A. (*laughing*). But could you not give me this treat, William? That goes off better *inter amicos* than before the public.

I. Half, and but half. I can tell you this and that, or show them to you *in naturâ;* and to tell you the

* *Een Groen*, i.e. a green one.

truth, I am full of observations and opinions, and I am longing—like every one else, especially like one whose own knowledge is new—to hang them out to air. But I am myself little more than a beginner. Besides, I believe that every one, especially in our profession, must get his own way of doing things, which he cannot adopt from another. I am the more confirmed in this belief, Altorf, since I have heard some of my contemporaries preach like a certain well-known professor, or seen them manage a troublesome parish after the manner of some other celebrated and cautious man. They had learned their part very well, but they played it badly.

A. Well now, we know one another's way of thinking from of old. You conceive, I would never learn to be such a minister as my friend is: your black coat would fit me but badly. But I should like to see you going about your round of duty that I might find out how I should act in mine. I would not merely have a minister for my friend, I would also see a friend as a minister.

I. A good idea; if the time of your stay should not be too short. But we can, meanwhile, make a beginning. If your time is not too much occupied, you can come here from time to time; and probably you will be able, when your examination for probationer is over, to come and attend an entire course with me, and meanwhile, in return, lighten for me the heavy work of preaching. That we may, however, make a regular beginning, name what you would wish first to know or see.

A. Very well, I can at once make a beginning. I wish to see *the poor*. You look surprised, William; I

will therefore explain to you more fully the cause of my visit. My rank and my education have always kept me at a distance from the poorest classes of society. My taste, or rather a fastidiousness carried to excess, has also contributed somewhat. I have learned to relieve the poor, but from a distance, from an elevation as it were. Now, as a minister, I am to be a friend—a fatherly brother of the poor; and I am still a stranger to them. I know the mode of living, thinking and speaking of the Hottentots nearly as well as theirs. It is as if they knew this by instinct, for they conceal themselves from me. I can find among them servants, guides, beggars, who will give me fair words, but nothing more. This must not continue. What do you think of it?

I. I think that many, who like you have been brought up in a great city, in the lap of abundance, have this defect, but that very few of them feel it; I also think by far the greater part of the clergy do not live on a friendly confidential footing with the poor; not even those who have the means and who have the heart to be their benefactors.

But first tell me one thing, Altorf. What ideas have you at present respecting the character of the poor? Beside your classical theological course of study, you have read works of polite literature. What do your books say about it?

A. Well, I don't know what I am to say about it. In my boyish days the period of sentimental literature was not wholly forgotten, at least my father's small library kept that period in remembrance for me. At that time I wept at the description of the two beggars

in Bellamij's Essays.* I regarded as my friends the mendicant Rosy and many an attractive troop of gypsies. At present I read, in excellent French-romantic or English-humoristic style, descriptions of alehouses, brothels, bridewells, and heaven knows what more,—in which all resemblance to human nature is lost. The former may not have been reality, the latter cannot be so. I should at least have to think, not that the Divine government is long-suffering, but that it is fast asleep, if not worse, if God's creatures, unless in exceptional cases, could degenerate so totally and so universally. I am therefore afraid, that under the fairest and most attractive forms, the fashionable literature of either a former period or of the present day, would not give me any insight into nature and truth. This then is what I want to see; for otherwise I should be converted into a mere Arcadian swain or the keeper of a house of correction, and not made the friend and director of the poor.

I. Well come, Altorf, that's all right. You have told me a good deal. So now, if the weather keeps up, I hope we shall be able to continue our conversation to-morrow as we walk in the open air, and I will show you the pictures belonging to my lessons and narratives.

"Gentlemen, will you never come down?" called out my wife. "I have passed from calling to screaming, and must now take to shrieking or else ring the house-bell."

* Bellamij is a Dutch poet, and these Essays (*Proeven*) are poems of which the full title is *Proeven voor het Verstand, den Smaak en het Hart.*

"Or come up yourself, Keetye: that would be the shortest way. But there's no need, we're coming down."

So we went downstairs, for we had been conversing in my library, which is my place for transacting all serious matters.

Next day, in the afternoon, we set out on our voyage of discovery. This we purposely made out of the village, both because the glorious weather invited us to walk, and because in the street of the village we should have attracted the attention of everybody, if we were continually going in and out, or standing still absorbed in our meditations. To explain the object of our voyage of discovery to the villagers would have been no easy matter, as they could never have conceived what there was to be seen in poverty; while if they had got some idea of it, the poor would make it forthwith a matter of speculation, and thus lose their natural appearance, which I was so anxious to exhibit to my friend.

We had got on our greatcoats, and Cornelia was giving mine a brush. "Have you got any cigars?" said I.

"Yes,—but what for? You surely are not become such an inveterate smoker, when you're out walking?"

"Not exactly so; but though I have promised to let you *see* poverty, you would rather perhaps not *smell* it. Besides, the lighting of a cigar is a ready introduction."

"Well thought of. But I'm afraid I've forgot something. Look here, is my purse sufficiently stocked? for I shall have to pay for the lesson, and I wish to do it liberally."

"And I say to you, that you shall have the lesson this time for nothing, absolutely for nothing. It would no doubt be extremely pleasant, and perhaps lead to some pathetic scenes, if you were to distribute here and there the contents of a well-filled purse; but the fame of it would run before you to the dike, and pursue you to-morrow in the village. That now is the very reason why the wealthy know so little about the poor; they visit them in order *to give*, and the poor expect them in order *to receive*. Hence flattery, hypocrisy, and the other arts which constitute the livelihood of many of the poor. When I visit I never give anything: this is a fixed rule, from which I rarely deviate. I can then plainly see whether I am personally welcome or not."

"You may be right. Warn me, then, when it is time, and I shall afterwards do it of myself."

So we set out on our walk. I had selected for the scene of our first excursion the Hokkendam, where Arij Ploegstaart was the star of first magnitude, the prince and nobleman. Here was poverty enough, and in copious variety, and by means of house-visiting and other opportunities I had become sufficiently acquainted with the people to be able, if needs, with the aid of my memorandum-book, to show others the way.

The beams of the sun had this day had to struggle through a misty atmosphere, which had first been brightened by the moon. The ways had therefore remained hard, and this favoured our walk. Our way, with which the reader is already familiar, led us direct to the dike which we intended to visit. It was literally a *way*, nothing more; that is to say, a narrow slip of land of the

same breadth throughout, between two ditches also of equal breadth,—not a single turn, not a single tree, hardly a solitary dwelling. He who first gets on it and then takes a view of the distance, especially in the winter, when no difference is to be seen in the crops, etc., may wait quietly a quarter of an hour to open his eyes a second time.

You are to suppose, reader, that we were in earnest conversation, especially on the object of our journey. The conversation of friends, though seldom too long for those engaged in it, is very apt to be so for those who read it; I will therefore give you the principal ideas which I communicated to my friend.

"We are apt to get an erroneous idea of *poverty* because we confound it with *want*, as we imagine to ourselves how *we* should be, and how it would affect *us* if we were in that condition. But our desires and necessities, even our virtues and our mental development, would not answer the poor at all. They would be just as unsuitable to them as my black coat to a thresher, or my Cornelia's satin-shoes to a peasant-girl going out to milk the cows.

"Poverty is therefore not in itself such a great misfortune for the poor, it is want that is. Want is a grievous thing in every condition and for every individual, for it supposes necessities that cannot be relieved, desires that cannot be satisfied. The want of a glass of wine or a piece of meat is just as unpleasant for the higher classes, as the want of coffee, snuff and tobacco is for the poor. Hence it is that the *impoverished* are worse off than the *poor*. Yon man with the shabby black coat, the patched trousers, the threadbare waistcoat, the worn-out cravat,

the foxy hat, and the broken shoes, is worse off than he that goes on wooden shoes and wears coarse clothes; for every article of his dress reminds him of better days, every look on younger brothers of his worn-out clothes causes a fruitless wish for happier times. Here too impoverishment is felt, and I shall show you some melancholy instances of it, and yet the transition from farmer to day-labourer is less than from master to servant. You may therefore see more of these unhappy persons in towns; there you have the poverty of artificial society, here for the most part only that of nature. He who is poor by nature—the poor by birth and station—is thus, in general, tolerably well off in his rank. Not that he himself considers that rank a fortunate one; he would look at you very strangely if you were to go about proving it to him. No, he adapts himself to it, he conforms to it; he knows no better, or he hears so. He has no doubt much more reason to be afraid of want and hunger than we, but this terror appals him less; a kind of fortunate, though rather perilous recklessness, of which we can hardly form a conception, makes him think but little of the morrow. He works, and has all he requires. So long, so well. If want comes, then he makes loud complaint; for why should he keep his woes to himself? He has not to support fashion or credit, and it relieves one to complain: that advantage he has over us. But his lot is a deplorable one, when he wants bread and suffers from cold, when he must not only do without little comforts and luxuries, but the rigorous winter and the general distress pull down both himself and his children. It is then that *we* feel our advantages and *he* his poverty. And yet the wants

of the respectable man, as they affect his honour, seem to be more insupportable than the poor man's want of bread. Every year many persons in the higher classes put an end to themselves when their affairs get into disorder; but of the many thousands who suffer hunger every winter, I have never heard of one who abridged his miserable existence. Perhaps no pain is unendurable so long as we can and may give utterance to it; and this is the very thing that the proud man of respectability cannot do.

"Then with regard to the notions and morals of the poor; perhaps they are rather better than worse than we are, but everything has with them a ruder, more animal form. That way of thinking which we call great and noble, is rare among them. They cannot even conceive it, it appears to them as extravagant and foolish as the sentimental and frantic does to us, which yet often originates in a good principle. Their religion, in like manner, is of a rugged nature; their faith is strong, but not pure; they may sometimes forget it, but they rarely desert it. The poor man is but half a Protestant: he has neither time, nor inclination, nor knowledge, for free inquiry, and he cannot raise himself above party prejudices. His natural feeling governs him therefore in religion, the voice of his conscience, the traditional notions of his forefathers, which you constantly hear repeated by him without alteration, and with that the greater or less reliance on your superior knowledge and your sagacity, though this last does not counterbalance with him the authority of the venerable traditions.

"In his way of living the poor man is nearer to the state of nature; not as imagination conceives it, but as

we may observe it in children as well as among rude tribes. His passions are strong, and self-restraint is a stranger to him. He is given to uproarious laughter and wild delight. He names himself first, and boasts of his own talents and virtues; mock-humility is therefore utterly unknown to him. The virtue which is the least to be met with in him is the *love of truth.* As all tribes of savages are deceitful, so also is the poor man. The self-immolation demanded by truth is too great for him; for him the union of the harmlessness of the dove with the wisdom of the serpent is too elevated. Still he does not lie and deceive for the mere pleasure of the thing only, but for his own advantage. If then you are rich, he will bless you, but at the same time he will impose on you with the most innocent face and the deepest cunning. If you are his landlord, master, or employer, he carries on a covert war against you, a *tirailleur's* campaign of all sorts of little artifices, just as schoolboys do against the master."

I was still talking away hard and fast, and my friend practising the "*hear and see and say nothing,*" merely throwing in from time to time a question or two; just as we give the fire a stir with poker or tongs, or throw on a log of wood when it begins to get low;—and before we ever thought of it we were on the declivity of the broad dike, which was bordered on both sides by three rows of stately elms or crooked ash-trees.

In the angle formed by the way and the dike stood a cottage. To get to it you must run the hazard of crossing the ditch by the aid of a narrow plank, slippery with mud and sludge. There was then a little pathway of

huge potato-leaves over the muddy soil which led to the door of the house. Fortunately the frost had made both of them more passable, so that with a little slipping and sticking in the mud we reached our destination. The under-part of the door was on the latch, the upper hung mournfully on one hinge. Some wooden shoes, lying under the penthouse, impeded one's entrance more than the door did.

Inspired as my friend was with a noble enthusiasm to learn what poverty was, he started back a little when he saw half-a-dozen dirty children creeping or running as hard as they could through the dark apartment. The youngest was in the cradle, and screaming might and main, while the mother seated on her *hunkers* before the fire boiling the pot did not seem to be aware of it. Two of the other children were fighting for the tongs, while the third was doing on the earthen floor what he should have done somewhere else.

As soon as the mother heard a rustling behind her she stood up, wiped the dirty, crying face of the child that was screaming with some rags, the remains of a former towel, took the tongs from those that were fighting for them, in order to chastise with them the remaining one, who from shame and terror crept behind a heap of straw; and thus prepared she looked for a chair, still good enough to offer the Dominie.

"Don't give yourself so much trouble, Mrs. Van-der-Zand. We're not going to sit down, I shall only just light a cigar."

A general silence. Only a muttering among the children, who still required a silent push or pinch, to keep

them in order. Meanwhile my friend, while lighting his cigar had a good opportunity of taking a closer view of the woman.

The black under-cap which properly should have covered *all* her hair, was placed so far awry as to let some jet-black locks appear; and her face spotted with smoke and soot, and drawn into a discontented despondent form, indicated that it was handsome rather than ugly. It was hardly possible to distinguish the colours of her jacket and petticoat, and they, as well as her neck-handkerchief and stockings, seemed constantly inclined to leave their own place. There was no necessity, it appeared to us, for this woman to undress, as she literally might shake her clothes off. Whether it were now to keep all together, or from cold, or from listlessness, be it as it may, her limbs hung all equally loose and relaxed. Is it any wonder that my friend had to overcome some degree of disgust before he could speak to her?

"You like living here, don't you, my good woman, at such a handsome dike?" he began, in order to say something.

"Ay, handsome indeed! we're always in mud and dirt; and then wages are so miserably low at the dike. I wish John could go at once to the village, but he is content to remain with the farmer he works for."

My friend was silent: I continued the dialogue for him.

"And how goes it in the place, Mrs. Van-der-Zand? I hear there is a great deal of flax-beating to be done this winter, and that Ploegstaart has splendid flax."

"Oh, ay, Ploegstaart will do well enough with it. But what is a stiver or eight stivers a day for a poor man who has a family to support?—Stop, Aai, I'll come to you!—Polly, if you don't hold your tongue . . . One has something to do, Dominie, with such bold children."

As, however, with the noise of the children we could hardly make ourselves be understood, and as, besides, I could tell what the remainder of the conversation would be, we resumed our walk, but not before Mrs. Van-der-Zand had seized this favourable opportunity of asking a larger share of relief *in money*. "Bread is very good no doubt, but one cannot get salt and soap for it." Now, to say nothing of the salt, we had not seen the slightest trace of soap in her dwelling.

"Poverty in the winter and with so large a family," said my friend, greatly affected, and when we had reached the dike without accident, "is a most dismal affair."

"It is so, and yet the lot of this woman inspires me with far less pity than it does you. Custom, to be sure, has something to do with it, but still more my accurate knowledge of the family."

"But as they do not earn more than eight stivers a day, how in the world is it possible for them to live?"

"Do you see? Even already the poor have proved too cunning for you. She told one truth, but she kept back more than one. The husband earns eight stivers, but two of the children are also earning; they have besides a cow, of which they have the profit, and I know it for a certainty that her family let them live rent-free in this cottage and do much more for them. Besides this they have their winter-supply of potatoes, and there were

whole weeks last summer in which they and their family earned twelve gulden, and yet they looked as dirty and as miserable as they do now.

"This woman, my friend, is one of those melancholy examples, less of *poverty* than of *impoverishment,* and that through their own fault. Her parents were well-to-do farmers in this parish, and left *pretty Molly* (for so she was called) a handsome bit of money. But from her very childhood she was a showy wanton lass, and indulged in dress, pleasure and flirting, till at last, owing to the rapid increase of her family, she lost both money and spirit and became a mere grumbling slattern. When good times come in the summer—for both husband and wife are good workers—they live away extravagantly, the children are neglected, no debts are paid, and they go on just as if winter was never to come; and if it were not that Arij Ploegstaart at the time of potato-digging, kept back, without their asking it, money for their winter-supply, the poor children would die of hunger."

"In truth, there is misery on all sides. And it is a hard task for us to make Christians of children that grow up thus like heathens."

"No doubt it is, and compassion for the way they are reared would give me patience and make me persevere with them, even though ingratitude is the usual return. But, look! there is another cottage, that makes a better appearance. Shall we go into it?"

"I follow you implicitly, you are my guide today."

We entered a cottage on the side of the dike. At the very entrance all was different. The little wooden shoes

that were here also, were put on one side in order; a spade, that shone like silver, stood, along with other tools, against the inner wall of the little barn through which you passed to the dwelling-house, and the pigsty in the corner was neater than Mrs. Van-der-Zand's house. The animal itself—though the general feeling is to regard it as an emblem of impurity—seemed to feel a pleasure in rubbing its clean bristles against the bundle of fresh straw. Within there was also a cradle, and two little children on the ground; but the mother, instead of crouching idly down at the fireplace, was hard at work sweeping the floor.

"Well, Dominie," was her reply to our greeting, "what vexes me is that you should have come when we're in such a muck. I was just readying up the place before the boys come from school. These little ones, Dominie, give a body something to do.

"They from the Lord a blessing are,
But off the clothes the nap they wear,"

says the proverb.

"Rich folk, like you, Sir, can have no idea of that, but children always make an empty purse and an involved property."

"Be quiet, Mrs. Ringers, for I myself have a little one, and so my property is also somewhat in disorder; I have, to be sure, but one, and you have six. Is it not so?"

"Yes, and I should have nine of them, if our Blessed Lord had not taken some. Now I have quite enough, and I have all along desired that it might remain so, but *we must have our number*, there's no remedy."

"And how much a day does Ringers earn at present?"

"Well, but a poor pittance, eight or ten stivers a day. It really is no easy matter *to keep from the church and the poor.* We are people who *live in the middle of the world,* but we would gladly *earn our bread with God and with honour.*"

We had just taken a seat and were going to sit down; but unluckily Altorf had put his chair close to one where the youngest child was, so that it was continually turning away its head, and then looking shyly at the strange gentleman, and finished by setting up a loud roar.

"Come, you stupid boy! Are you so shy still? Am I to hear you again?"

This stern admonition was interrupted by the arrival of two little chaps. The youngest ran before, without seeing any one, and cried out, "Mother, the Master has given me a new book;" and more than happy the child held up the new book, the token of advancement in the school. "Ay, ay, these new books, it's with these the Master ruins poor workpeople. It will be a matter of five stivers. Here"—and she took the prize out of the child's hand—"give it to me, or it will be spoilt the very first day. But what's this? your wooden shoes on you! Out with you! And you, Arij, don't you see who's sitting there?"

In a moment the little fellow got a thump on the back, and the bigger one's cap was taken off and put in his hand. The one howled, the other trembled.

My friend could no longer restrain his benevolence. He took out his purse, and gave the one little chap some-

thing for his diligence and the other for his compulsive good manners, and some cakes were to be got for the younger ones. He took to the children; the mother now wiped the tears from their faces. I smiled with secret satisfaction at seeing my friend's philanthropy making him forget his promise. Those are the happiest, though not the wisest moments, in which feeling overcomes reasoning.

"Happy are you, ye rich!" said I as we were going out; "you can diffuse blessings everywhere, like beneficent Angels. And yet how many of the rich are so unlucky that they do not know true happiness! Altorf, you have violated my precept, but you have given me satisfaction. In order to give you such another opportunity, I will before you go away take you to where *bread* is wanting. But now as to our voyage of discovery. I have shown you a good poor person, a worthy, honest and clever mother of a family; nay, I think I may say a religious woman, though she herself says she lives *in the midst of the world*, because she does not belong to the recognized pious; I have shown you a good poor body, and you have felt annoyed.—Nay, don't look at me as if you were going to contradict me; it is even so. Your mind, more tenderly pitched than that of this woman, was affected by the child; and to be revenged on the mother you have been kind to the child. It is fortunate that, just as she had no feeling for the delight of the child, so she never noticed your annoyance."

My friend agreed that I was right. We continued our walk, and, after another visit of the same kind, we returned home by the friendly aid of the moon.

XVI.

THE VISIT.

I AM sitting in my summer-house, my faithful dog at my feet, my faithful pipe filled and in my hand. The hand is rather thin, and is resting on the arm of my chair; for it is the first time, on a fine summer-day of this year, 1843, that I have walked round the whole garden, and I am seated in my little arbour, waiting for my Cornelia. I still feel the weakness, which remains after the sick-bed, but at the same time my slowly returning powers, and the summer-air, which has not yet arrived at burning heat, holds me in her lap and invigorates me with her soft breath, as an affectionate mother does her nurseling.

I had just got on so far in the plan I had laid down in a previous year, that I had gone over in my mind the two first years of my ministry, and had collected what was most remarkable in them, when a severe fever forced me to drop my pen; for like all others, the plans of us, speakers and writers, have need of the general clause of James, "*If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that.*"

My excellent wife has now quieted our youngest, our fourth little one, and is hurrying to get my soup ready, and then to take coffee with me. Bram, my eldest,

has assumed my office, and is standing on a little mount in the garden, stammering forth, and fancying that he is preaching, though no one listens to him, while our two intermediate children are going round and round in a little carriage.

How calm and how happy does everything I see make me! In the garden my children at play, and the latest flowers of spring, which humbly keep close to the ground, while the rose and other summer-flowers are already lifting their heads on high. Outside of the frame the peaceful couple of milch-cows, who weary my brain just as little as they do their own; and then from afar some stir of men, the most restless and discontented of God's creatures, but distant enough not to disturb my repose. These people are farmers, who are returning from town along yonder road, and are bringing home groceries, money, news, and I hope a good conscience, in their empty carts.

I am sitting, then, in my favourite summer-house, and have just—with all the satisfaction belonging to one who is not in the slightest hurry—filled and lighted my pipe, which I have only begun to relish within the last few days. I see into the garden through the glass-door. There comes our maid impatiently along the serpentine walk, which she regularly curses every time we sit in the summer-house.

"A letter, Sir."

"Lay it on the table, Nancy."

"Five stivers postage, Sir."

"Five stivers is it? Those good friends of ours in the city write a letter in the middle of the day, and put it

in the post when they're taking their evening walk, and never think of sending it by hand; and thus forget to put the pleasant word *Free* on the address, never recollecting that we poor village Dominies have sometimes to rummage our whole desk to make out five stivers.—Go now, Nancy, ask your mistress for it, for I have no money."

The reader will understand that the first half of this speech was addressed in a low tone to the letter, which I took meanwhile in my hand to open. A half-loud soliloquy, however, of this kind, in which I'm used to indulge, ran no risk, for our maid is very nearly as deaf as the letter itself.

Meanwhile out comes my wife—and what wife does not when a letter is opening?—in a great hurry, enters at the door of the summer-house, fishes a five-stiver-piece up out of her purse, and asks, "From whom? from Uncle John, dear?" The moment we saw the firm, legible hand, my wife had the silent permission to look over my shoulder, for I have no secrets with Uncle John, and consequently his letters are a part of the goods which we enjoy in common.

I read from top to bottom, as I like order in all things, —my wife from bottom to top, in order to know the main subject the sooner; and meanwhile the maid went back grumbling along the serpentine walk.

This time my wife did not get at the matter a bit sooner than myself, for the first page was all introduction. First came some reminiscences of well-known matters, and what he had heard of me, and how he had heard it, and then,—"So that I will only say, Nephew William,

that we deeply mourned for you. It does not surprise me that, according to the last accounts from Keetye, you have been weak, and do not yet take any pleasure in your work. I said to your aunt, 'He sits there dozing and growing musty among those farmers, he wants a little shaking-up.'—*Shaking-up!* am I then grown so dull or sunk so low?—'It will *alter* them a little.' Is not my head then in the right place?—'*Distract*'" . . . . but I prefer keeping my thoughts properly together.

I was here interrupted in my silent parenthesis by the impatience of my wife, who cried out, "But, William, turn over the leaf, I have got twice to the end, and I believe you are learning it by heart."

I turned over and found, to be brief, on the second page the plan of my good Uncle, which was on the following Thursday to come with his whole family and spend a comfortable day with us.

As I was folding the letter I made the remark, that the interest our good city friends took in us appeared to increase and decline annually with the increase of the summer-heat and the decline of the winter's sun. But my good Cornelia had no time for philosophic speculations; for while I was quietly leaning back in my armchair, balancing the pleasures and the annoyances of the coming Thursday she cried out in a peevish tone, "Now that's a pretty piece of business! Aunt might have remembered that I cannot get any fresh meat before the day after tomorrow. The butcher has been here already, and the market-day is past. But these city-folk fancy that it is everywhere as it is with them, and that one has only to send out the maid. Do give me some advice,

William! You're sitting there as cool as if it was nothing to you!"

And now ensued a domestic consultation on the choice between hung beef, ham, or fish, and all such important matters, which can have no great interest for the reader, so long as he has not to entertain people himself.

Let no one, however, suppose that in itself Uncle John's visit was disagreeable to us. If my wife had only the arranging of the table in her head, she would have desired it, had she not begun at that very moment to feel compassion for me; and at any other time, if I were but strong and healthy, I should have been delighted to see the worthy, true-hearted man.

While my wife is running about and I am sitting still, both in preparation for the important day, I will make you a little better acquainted with a kinsman whose name has already appeared more than once in these Sketches.

My Uncle John, a younger brother of my lamented father, is a tobacconist in Rotterdam, a most respectable citizen. He is no oddity, and has few peculiarities; what distinguishes him is, that he is wholly a Dutch trader, wholly a Rotterdamer, and wholly a tobacconist. His business occupies very much both his head and his heart, and he can never refrain from telling you something about Porto Rico and Maryland, if it were only when he is filling his pipe. He is not, however, wholly absorbed in business; for he is, as a matter of course, a member of a club and of a reading-room; both are on a par in his estimation; bottle and pipe, and book and conversation, they are none of them *things*, merely *amusement*. So also he regards literature and printing as a

mere matter of *trade;* the writer delivers, the reader pays, and so all is liquidated; only that the writer has to complain of a bad sale if the reader is *not amused;* if the book is good, why should he lavish praise on it? it was right well paid for. In the Club, evening and morning, when he reads the papers, he is a politician, like all other Dutchmen. He decides the fate of Turkey and Spain; he firmly opposes every new tax, but ends with paying it; and he is a bitter enemy to hawkers, to the French with their excise, and to all duties on coffee and tobacco.

As to his body, Uncle John enjoys rude health: he recognizes merely two human infirmities, *catching cold* and *constipation,* and the two most potent arms against these, camomile and elder-flowers and rhubarb form his whole domestic medicine. All serious illnesses, according to him, arise from the neglect of these remedies or from using them when it is too late. Other diseases, especially acute ones, are in his eyes mere novelties, heresies, scandalous abuses. Consumption alone he allowed to be a disease of the country, though it is so often brought on by fretting and hypochondria; but nervous diseases are a corruption of our good old Dutch morals, a Parisian fashion brought in to our disgrace.

And his religion? This consists in a profound reverence for the Bible, and in an upright, philanthropic life. He embraces the Protestant faith with heart and soul, as the only true one; and what is true, says he, does not require to be examined anew, to see if it is true. He terms the Roman Catholics Jesuits, the Separatists Scholtianians and mutineers, the Remonstrants freethinkers, and the Jews rogues and cheats. Of all

this he is as convinced as that twice two is four. Finally Uncle John is a thorough citizen. The atmosphere in which he breathes—with the exception of one day in each year, which he spends with me—extends from the New-work (*Nieuwe-werk*) to the Plantation (*Plantagie*) and from the Wooden-bridge (*Heul*) to the Trees (*Boompjes*); the streets of the city are his path of life, the Meuse is for him the stream of time, and the trees at the ports are the emblems of the seasons. With all this he is quite content, and even in imagination he goes beyond this only in the tobacco-trade,the news in the papers and the books of the reading-room. Any one who travels without need is in his eyes a discontented man, who finds no rest at home and perhaps has a bad conscience; and as for country-life, it appears to him to be the true element of peasants and cows. For his own part he is fully convinced that if there, he would fall into a consumption in three months, positively so in the first winter.

So far for the portrait, now follows the original.

On Thursday morning I am seated, by eight o'clock, at breakfast, which is taken by stealth, as it were, and got away in double quick time. After that, whatever else I have to think of or to do, I fix my eye constantly and steadily on the beautiful winding dike with its splendid trees, the glory of our fertile fields. Toward ten o'clock I discern a carriage at a distance; that must be they. My wife strains her eyes to the utmost to be able to distinguish clearly; Bram, with great gravity, tells how he shall say "Good-morrow, Uncle!" and Mina asks, as well or as ill as she can, "Will Aunt bring cakes with her?"

The *char-à-banc* now stops at the gate of the Manse. Uncle has his handkerchief in his hand to wipe the perspiration off, and Aunt has a reticule, etc. etc. One—two—three—four—five—and now all the children are unpacked, and the rest of the baggage follows; forage and luggage as if it were for eight days. What is all this they are carrying themselves? I know already. There comes Uncle with a large bag of tobacco, which he never forgets when he visits us; were it not that he has so many children, he would surely do far more; he thrusts the bag with such heartiness on my arm, "There, my boy! as long as you smoke, the doctor will gain nothing by you." Aunt, though panting with the heat, remains the last in the carriage, in order first to unpack carefully a dress-cap and then a couple of bottles of wine, and next "the old things that Niece can turn to account in the country." Meanwhile Uncle has not come in yet; he is arranging accurately with the driver "when he is to call for them, that they may not have to ride in the dark." At last they are all seated.

Our family is now more than doubled, children increased by children, grown people by grown people. There was however in this classification an inconvenience which exists not as yet in my family. My cousin and namesake William is now fifteen, and is therefore at a troublesome age,—a regular hobbledehoy, a *hors-d'œuvre*, or, in plain Dutch, an *onding* (i. e. nonentity). Set him to play with the children, his shot-up figure stretches out over the others, and as he is ashamed to play as a boy he does everything awkwardly. Offer him a pipe, he is a child among the men. He hops no longer and

yet he has not a firm tread; he babbles no more, and yet he speaks either too much or too little; he has no longer a sweet look, and he does not yet smoke with a relish: in short he is standing in the doorway between the little and the great theatre of the world, learning his part. We shall then put him with the grown people, not to lower him. When he has got a chair and a pipe, let him then decide in which hand he will hold his pipe and which leg he will throw over the other. Cousin Jenny—she is a year younger, but girls are sooner like grown people —was somewhat similarly placed between my aunt and my wife. The three youngest of both sexes had soon *fraternized,* as the French say, with my two elder children and were gone into the garden.

My wife proposed that we should take coffee in the summer-house, "the view from it was so extensive and so cheerful." That meant, as any one who understands the language of a Dutch mistress of a family, that our sitting there prevented her preparing the meal, which a Dutchwoman lays out for her guests with as much care as a General his order of battle for the enemy, or an actor his wardrobe and his loose scenes for the public.

We therefore migrated to the summer-house. Uncle John sits and smokes. "Well, William, well my lad! you're looking rather thin. No doubt with the March weather out here you got cold, and that gives people the fever, if they do not perspire in time. But keep your spirits up now and drive the sickness out of your head. It would be a sad business if you were to fall into ill-health here, without any society among these stupid peasants, and you could not well trust your *corpus* to

a village-cobbler." I merely replied—speaking of Du Meaux, who had treated me ably and kindly—that our doctor answered us extremely well. I knew that this was the highest possible praise that a country practitioner could ever obtain with him; and that he could never be brought to believe in the existence of a village-surgeon in whom one might place as much confidence as in a city-doctor. As for the *stupid peasants*, I let them stay where they were. For as in former years I had had many an unpleasant skirmish to no purpose with Uncle John, nay, sometimes nearly lost his friendship, I have adopted with him the tactics of keeping on neutral ground, holding my own position covered, and not attacking his; and I can from experience recommend these tactics to those who have to do with people of firm and immovable opinions; nay, I regard it almost as a duty toward those who are more advanced in years, when these firm opinions do not prevent their being respectable men and true Christians. We never improve them when we raise a hostile hand against their cherished hobbies.

While Uncle was going on thus, Cousin William and I had given many a look, through the glass-door, at the plays of the children in the garden; Cousin with an ill-suppressed laugh at their droll jumps and bounds, and with a secret wish to make one among them, and I—Alas! I suppressed my emotions. Oh, my borders! My gardener was at work all day, yesterday, settling them and making them neat. And if that was all! but see, there they go right across my tulips! Reader, they are playing at prison-bars, and the hunted party knows

as well as my deaf maid, without a lesson in mathematics, that the right line is the shortest between two points; yet this also submits—in a single exception, by stealth—to the rules of English gardening: but my young cousins . . . no, I can stand it no longer. And see there, they are dragging little Bram and Mina too by the hand through the bushes and over the beds! Why, even my own children seem to be mad and distracted too!

This was not to be endured any longer; so I got up and proposed a walk. The proposal was accepted, and I took advantage of it to lay at least some restrictions on the work of devastation. I pretended—it was only half-honest of me—to lay all the blame on my own children and the maid. Uncle saw that these were domestic matters, which did not concern him, and looked up at the sky, afraid lest the weather should not keep up, though there was nothing to be seen but the white cloudlets that rose from his own pipe. But Aunt—with the usual tact of a woman—saw my object, ordered my little cousins not to go off the walk, and said, "Nephew, they're a little wild, once they get into the country. You can make the gardener rake it all up to-morrow morning."

Rake it up! Was that all that was to be done!

Uncle began to talk of his favourite garden on the Binnenweg (*Bye-way*) which he had taken on account of the health of William and Jenny, when they were little ones, and where he had drunk many a social bottle with his friends, but which very circumstance had made it come rather expensive.

I took the liberty to observe, that when land was sold in small parcels, every fruit-tree was valued and all other plants counted in the inventory, and that even the view was cut out in small strips and accurately divided among many neighbours.

Aunt then praised the freedom and ease of a country-life, as we enjoyed it, at least in the summer. "It is so pleasant and healthy for the children; and one has everything so fresh out of one's own garden for nothing, that one's obliged to pay so dear for in the city."—"*For nothing!*" thought I, and groaned; for this week the garden will not be mine *for nothing.*

We had got near the wall planted with wall-fruit trees, while the women were gone to look after their children. I was just engaged in pointing out to Uncle and Cousin how very promising was every apricot- and peach-tree, when on looking up I observed that Uncle was standing with his back to them, and Cousin William, thinking no one saw him, had snatched up an apple that had fallen, to throw among the children who were at play.

We walked on. What dreadful devastation! Being rendered more sensitive by my weakness, I almost wept with vexation at the sight of my larkspur trampled down flat; a little further on my red mayflower looked like a bird whose feathers had been plucked out by the merciless sparrow-hawk. Aunt herself had taken out her scissors, with the silver chain, to cut a nosegay, and Cousin Jenny was weaving garlands of flowers, and praising in a sentimental tone the blissful enjoyment of Nature. Oh me!

Uncle had now walked twice round the garden, and

found that quite enough. "How goes it, Niece? Should we not drink some coffee? For if it is convenient, I should not like to dine too late. We got up early, and we must be home before it is dark."

My wife assured him that "he took the words out of her mouth;" and we returned to the summer-house. Fortunately we were accompanied by the young brood, who had a hankering after mother's reticule, and so, while eating and drinking, they would do less mischief.

As soon as the children, mine included, had got their share, they were anxious to leave that confined space, with their hands full of cakes. I too began to long to get rid of them, for my eyes were dazzled and my ears dizzied as with the rushing of a storm in spring, and I now must sacrifice my garden to my head.

It was now at last possible to have some regular conversation. Cousin Jenny, who held a rose to her nose and at intervals cast her eyes up to heaven, or rather to the roof of my summer-house, again expatiated on "the inexpressible happiness of a country-life."

Uncle John gave a long pull at his pipe, as he always does when he has anything of importance to say, that it may not go out while he is talking, and thus began: "Ay, ay, I can thus in the summer pass a day very pleasantly in the country, and I cannot say but that I have spent this day very agreeably; but for a continuance it would soon tire me. I should like to see something more passing by than farmers going to market and dung-carts to the land. And then, in the winter to be looking out on that horrid mud and that naked land, without people, without conversation! Hark-ye, William, it is

a pity of you. Bless me! 'Tis now five years—is it not? Ay, man, every one is his own master, but I'm rather annoyed about you; I had done my best; you should have accepted the call last year, and not be thinking 'something better will offer.' If you go on doing so, it may be with you as with the girls who are too hoity-toity: they become old maids and every one laughs at them. But don't look so grave; I don't despair. Owing to my business I have some good channels to work for you with; for every one requires a wheelbarrow."

I *did* look grave; for however kindly meant, these words grieved me. Worthy man, why give yourself all this trouble? And really can one not be happy out of that eddying whirlpool of humanity? Do not my Cornelia and I find here employment and content in abundance for the whole of a mortal life? Verily when people thus bemoan us, and calculate the years that we pass unpromoted in our first place—this honour they do us is a bitter satire, an utter derision of our profession. Is then our dignity, as well as our worldly state, to be always estimated by the report of the 'Library' and the Minister of —— after our name?

Every one requires a wheelbarrow. Very good, if it is to produce good wares and make them known where they are forgotten; but when it is to force one forward who of himself can only creep, to smuggle in by bye-ways wares that are not wanted or are not suitable, then must you who trundle and you who let yourself be trundled, and you who take in the barrow, all of you answer for it to the Lord of the congregation.

Whenever we are called by means of unasked-for officiousness to where we are not desired and not wanted, while pressing business calls us at home, and we would rather stay where we are—as was the case with me last year—how can we make the world, which has only learned to weigh and measure, add and subtract, conceive and feel it?

"And what answer did Uncle make?"—Well, I said nothing of all that to Uncle. I only said, "With time, Uncle, every one gets into his right place; and as for the present it's all well as it is."

"Very well, William," said the good man in his usual good-natured tone, in which was not to be traced the slightest annoyance on account of the rejected call. "I know that you can suit yourself to it, and that's what's best in all worldly matters."

Meanwhile my Cornelia had been giving a knowing look at Uncle, and in fact before she took or perhaps would take my wink she had to step out. "And if Uncle only knew. . . ."

It was in vain for me now to descant on it, and make it appear to be a word without meaning or object, Aunt had read too much in my wife's looks, the truth must out.

The fact was that, even before my illness I had had *hearers* and even *town-hearers;* that that situation was not yet filled-up, and it was said that they were still thinking seriously of me. I was trembling at the idea that Uncle, when he learned this good tidings, would set himself to work; and as the account could not be deferred, I added that our business was to keep it a

secret; as untimely interference, especially by *family influence,* would probably deprive me of all chance.

At this moment the maid came to call my wife, and a few minutes after my wife called us all.

While we were going in to dinner a strawberry-bed that was cleared out showed me the doings of the youngsters. Neither ripe nor unripe had escaped. Cornelia had carefully gathered a dish in the forenoon, and had left for me all that was not fully ripe. But now my favourite refreshment is gone and for good; for children are like rats and mice, they destroy more than they eat. And what could I say? Aunt herself has just picked a few that had escaped the sharp eyes of the children, and says, "What a pleasure 'tis, Nephew, to have fruit so fresh!"

I shall say nothing of the dinner. If I did, I should have to speak of my wife's good taste in her arrangements, and of my family in clearing the table, and how Aunt said while she cut all the meat from the short rib and left us the bones, "What an appetite the country air gives one!" But the reader can easily imagine this and more of the same kind; table-talk has sunk greatly in value since Plato's time; and I cannot say that I expected a philosophic observation from one who is just picking the leg of a fowl, or a religious exhortation out of a mouth which must be previously wiped with a napkin; peculiarities are always preserved, and these are perhaps the most singular, in our good, thorough Dutch, civic class, who when they enjoy anything, enjoy it and it alone.

I was tired, very tired, and Cornelia who observed it said, "William, had you not better take some rest?"

"Ay, you're quite right," cried Uncle, before I could say a word; "come, Nephew, you a corner there and I one here, and the bottle on the table between us, and then you can rest yourself well. As an old Dutchman I'm used to take a nap; it helps digestion."

How gladly would I have excused the corner there and gone to my own room, to lay my head down for an hour at least on my Trommius, with the old college cover of coarse cloth. I must now let myself be also persuaded that a glass of wine is good after dinner, while my poor head is splitting.

From weariness, and encouraged by the snoring of my opposite neighbour, I should at last have fallen asleep had I not been roused up by a dreadful cry of distress. I stood bewildered and trembled all over. Uncle John gaped and rubbed his eyes; the women who were inspecting the upper rooms, to leave us to ourselves, hurried downstairs in all haste; and amidst a fearful disharmony of complaints, screaming and telling their story, the children rushed into the house just like chickens that fly to the hen when terrified by the hawk or the polecat. At the sight of blood the alarm became greater. Uncle growled over the wildness of the youth of the present day, my wife plastered and bound up, Aunt wept and comforted, and I growled and bound up and comforted as well as I could.

The alarm was soon dissipated: the fright was greater than the injury. The boys had had a quarrel over their, or rather over my flowers, and one had flung off the other so that he had come with his head against a stone wall, and the other children thought there was neither more

nor less than a murder perpetrated. As however the wound was not deep, matters became so quiet in half an hour that we were able to make arrangements for taking tea in the summer-house.

The heavy artillery was reserved for the last. After Uncle John had with his wonted kindness given me many a good piece of advice, the sum of which was "to be cheerful and to study little, good eating and drinking and then—something else." Aunt was rummaging her pocket. We knew by this manœuvre what was to be expected. There developed itself out of the folds of gown and petticoats, even as the chicken breaks out of the egg, or as the butterfly works its way out of the integument of the chrysalis, the large green almanac, fed fat with receipts, greasy with roast-meat, worn bare with use for many years in the kitchen. When the string was loosed it sprang open, like the mouth of a gossip. Out of that mouth came to light all kinds of receipts, for broths, for hartshorn, for half-a-dozen various preparations of sago, etc. etc., all especially calculated, as Aunt assured us, "for setting up one that was delicate." My wife received it with thanks, and I, speaking to Uncle, admired the hand that had written them out, in so loud a tone that Cousin William broke his pipe and let his cup fall out of his hand.

With this terminated the adventures of the day, for Uncle John is a man of the clock, and, as I have already observed, does not like to travel in the dark.

Nearly everything was therefore packed up again, the carriage was only lightened of the cap, the two bottles of wine, the cakes, the bag of tobacco, the old clothes,

and the receipts. After that "Now a parting glass!" and then kissing all round—but I will not go on any further; every Dutchman knows what a family-parting is.

On Friday I lay in a quiet dark room, Du Meaux standing with a contracted brow at the bedside, and Cornelia, with an anxious look at the watch, was giving me my draught of valerian.

It is now Tuesday again, and I am sitting once more in my summer-house. If I am not cheered up again, and get no more good advice, I hope to appear in my pulpit next Sunday.

XVII.

UNFORESEEN CONCLUSION.

Rotterdam, 20th Sept., 1843.

My dear Friend Altorf,

Well, you would never have dreamed, when I sent you my last Sketch to read, that a few weeks later I should write to you from Rotterdam, and that from an upper-room at Uncle John's, where our clothes, papers, and other most necessary articles are lying higgledy-piggledy as if they were in an auction-room; where my Cornelia is puffing and blowing with the fatigue and the heat, and little Bram is asking me, "Papa, do all the people here live up in the sky?"—But during the time that you are at Paris, gay and tranquil, such a change and such a tumult has taken place in my still life, that I must, as well as I can collect my scattered senses, give you a regular account of it.

You know that I had a very serious illness in the May and June of this year. I shall not give you an *historia morbi*, as our doctors term it: it is bad enough to be sick, and why should we annoy our friends with telling them all the disagreeable and disgusting circumstances? I prefer therefore going back to another circumstance, which has been the source and origin of so many others. —*Hinc illæ lacrimæ!*

Beyond question one of the most important events in the simple and uniform life of the village-pastor is a call. A probationer is in general regarded as a candidate who appears publicly in his own cause; but a young village-pastor may be likened to a young lady, who the more vehemently she protests her preference for glorious liberty, longs all the more earnestly for a proposal. It is the safest way, then, to say little about it, as the more you protest the contrary, the more eager for a change you are assumed to be. Perhaps in this, as in most other cases, there is some truth in the severe judgement of the public.

I shall carry this comparison even further. Just as a girl has her time, so have we. That term begins when, in accordance with the law, we have passed two years in our first place; when we have entered on the eleventh year of our ministry there, or the sixteenth in a future place, the time has quietly gone by. No later calls can be calculated on; they are set down as extraordinary events, along with the marriage of a maiden of fifty or the death of an old man of a hundred years. Along with this the ordinary course of the world is that the elderly maiden still counts on her fingers her former lovers, or satirizes the idle and negligent present mode of courtship; —shall I go on with the comparison? . . .

In the season of our bloom, especially the first years, our *promotion* is an inexhaustible source of conversation for all interested friends. They would esteem it indelicate to say to a young woman, who had reached the verge of old-maidenhood, "It vexes me, Cousin, that no one has asked you yet;" but they rarely use this delicacy

with us. *Promotion* is, alike in the manse and in the parish, the constant subject of conversation. As to the parish, by a natural and incautious open-heartedness they invariably ruin their own cause. If they are anxious to change their minister, by making an exaggerated complaint far and wide they scare off other parishes. If on the other hand they are fond of their minister, they allure them, by trumpeting far and wide equally exaggerated praises; they actually attract the dreaded *hearers*, by showing their dread of them.

It may be that some, regarding this comparison as too vulgar and too prosaic for so sacred a matter, will be little pleased with it; but I know, friend Altorf, that your object is to get a knowledge of human nature at Mastland as well as Paris. And men are always men, just as much in sacred as in temporal matters.

To come to my own case. The dreaded *hearers* had already visited our church more than once, and you know that last year their visit had been followed by a call. With what a mysterious countenance came the worthy Herman Balyon on those occasions to fetch the glass of water from the manse, and seek with ardent impatience to speak "just one word" with the Dominie; and then he raised alternately, now the one, then the other foot from the ground, and with a mysterious little laugh, pinching his chin with his forefinger and thumb, said, or rather whispered, "There will be again something to do this morning or noon . . ." Then when the worthy congregation, with their wonted devotion, moved on steadily and slowly to the church-door, and saw the strange carriage, or remarked in the church itself the important

personages who were directing their eyes along the walls and up to the roof,—verily it then required great power of language to keep the attention wholly and undividedly to a place of Scripture, or rather the most powerful eloquence would have failed. And as they were going out, how many guesses about the place that had sent out these hearers! Could the landlord know anything of it? Would the strange driver let it out? Could one on the next market-day fix the reports of the ferrymen and the market-people on any known vacancy?

"And yourself now," I hear you say; "come, tell the truth:—Were you on those days quite at ease?"

I pause not a moment to answer: "No, not by any means." "And why not?" say you. What reply shall I make? I believe we are seldom actuated by a single feeling or desire. As in nature the co-operation of various powers causes the course of things, so is it in the human soul. Single and ignoble principles, love and ambition, piety and covetousness, and what not, usually co-operate, in order to make us think, speak and act in such and such a manner.

I am *at my ease* when I am full of a divine truth; I have been able to prepare myself well to speak on it; and now, I behold my wonted hearers, the longer the more my own, calm and attentive before me. I then speak with as much ease as a father in the midst of his children. But just as the solemn visit of a stranger disturbs the domestic circle, so do strange hearers disturb the tranquillity of a village-church. Can *I* then suppose, especially as I am listened to for a special purpose, that I am only preaching the Gospel to sinners? No, I mount

the pulpit to let myself be seen,—posture, bearing, features, eyes and hands: I speak, to let myself be heard; voice and style and mode of thought. Even if I would put all this away, even if I could forget the natural desire of pleasing, which makes us be different among strangers from what we are at home; even were I totally free from that ambition which urges even the most fortunate of men to further and higher objects, can I calculate on the usual attention? In fine then I require an extraordinary exertion not to preach worse than usual, just at the time when, to gratify my friends, I should do it particularly well. Should not the *hearers* also hear many an humble conscientious man to disadvantage, as they do not hear him sufficiently unobserved; while, on the contrary, the bold, ambitious preacher, animated by their presence, rises above his usual level?

Enough! The first showers had blown over without touching Mastland. Only that call, which I got the year before, had set all the authorities in motion. Burgomaster and Governors, Kirk-session, Ruling Elders and Schoolmaster, all called on me *ex officio*, begging me to stay. They even offered me some little pecuniary advantages. Mr. Duifhuis was exceedingly active on Session-days; Balyon spoke with much more fervency than ever; and Du Meaux exhibited far more interest in my behalf than I had expected of him. The farmers then, inasmuch as they did not belong to the aristocracy of the place, and the whole of the lower order, seemed to await the result of the negotiations as patiently as a frontier-town in Limburg or Brabant the decisions of the Conference of London. To tell you the truth, this disappointed

me. I had expected that the whole congregation *en masse* would have stormed my manse; and now they came only in the character of some few friends. Really this had nearly made me go; and it was only the knowledge that the parish which called me was not unanimous that made me decline. But I *now* saw that I had not known my people: I had taken external coldness and stiffness for depreciation of my person and services; and many who had not presumed to take the liberty of calling on me, I afterwards found to be thoroughly delighted at my stay.

But I will not stray into particulars; I will go on. In the month of April of this year, a carriage which rolled into Mastland on Sunday between eight and nine in the morning set the whole village again in commotion. It was no open carriage, no old-fashioned, burgomasterish, notarial vehicle: no, it was a carriage *in optimâ formâ*, painted and varnished on the outside, and provided within with soft cushions and little curtains, and laden with six gentlemen,—three slender and three stout, one half of whom wore spectacles. They inquired for the inn, and at what hour church began. There could be no doubt of it,—they were *hearers*. Instantly the rising generation of Mastland flowed to the carriage to admire it; while the townhall was thronged, a female head appeared above every window-blind, and even the imperturbable sedateness of Madam Van-der-Zander was so far disturbed that she appeared at the window with only her black undercap on, her hood in her hand and the gold pins in her mouth.

Hearers then they were. Before five minutes it was

determined at Mrs. Wijsland's counter that the three stout gentlemen were Elders and the three slender ones Deacons, that they possibly came from some considerable village, but most probably from a city. The quantity of mud on the wheels seemed to indicate a certain well-known ferry. But on which side of the river? There all trace was lost, and a few guesses, I mean of the Hague and Amsterdam, were shown by the geography of Mr. Duifhuis to be untenable. Job Wijsland was sent out to reconnoitre; but it was all in vain to tempt the driver with a dram, or the gentlemen with a little friendly chat. A gentleman, when placed in a high position, knows how to preserve his *incognito* better than a countryman, who is only clever at dissembling in country matters.

To tell you the truth, while worthy Herman Balyon was communicating to the bell of the manse the trembling motion of his arm I comprehended the whole business. I knew that in the town of X— the *annus gratiæ* for a widow had been observed. My too officious friends had long ago flatteringly assured me that I was thought a great deal of there; and I had got a gentle hint *to mind what I was about* on the latter Sundays of April and the first of May. My first feeling therefore was an agreeable sensation; the state of anxious expectation was at length to cease.

"And it comes so pat," exclaimed Cornelia, "such a nice subject and all written and got by heart!"—She was right, especially in what she said last; I now at least knew that the arrival of the strangers would cause no alteration in my sermon.

I preached. The six gentlemen, as previously agreed on, dispersed themselves through the *little church,* and two of the Deacons who wore spectacles disdained not to sit in the back, *in the midst of the peasants!* Master Balyon supplied the others with cushions and Bibles, half friendly, half mournful, even as a mother attends on the captain who is taking her only son with him to sea.

By a vigorous effort I succeeded in driving the strangers out of my mind, and only seeing before me a Christian assembly. My prayer on the stair of the pulpit had this time been really a prayer. The church was cleared, and the gentlemen satisfied the landlord's bill but not his questions, so that he muttered between his teeth, "Had I known you to be so proud and stand-off, by my troth I'd have added two five-stiver-pieces to the bill."

My illness, which occurred soon after, caused some interruption to the constant looking out for further tidings from X—; for by means of various combinations and invincible patience Mrs. Wijsland had got at the name at last. When death appears, even though it be at a distance, it puts an end at once to the talk, the plans, the calculations of man. Just as always at the entrance of an unbidden guest we stop our game, to resume it with renewed enjoyment, so when Pierre du Meaux had clearly shown that the danger was over, the vacant place became once more the subject of general conversation. Most people thought that it was lasting too long, but Duifhuis proved convincingly, that the year for a Minister's widow must last long, simply because it is a year; and Van-der-Zanden set his burgomaster seal to it.

The visit of my worthy Uncle John *cum suis* was over, and I addressed for the first time my people again. I can honestly say that I had not the remotest thought of *vacancies* or of *hearers*. It was to me like a new induction. I had come back from the brink of the grave and the view of eternity, to speak again of the grave and of eternity. I spoke with deep feeling, and if the old saw be true, *Pectus est quod disertos facit*, I spoke well. After the words of the Saviour respecting Lazarus, *This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God*, I pointed out to my people the many and blessed advantages of sickness, when it does not lead to the grave but back again unto life. Who could, when thus engaged, mind those two strangers who had separately walked through the village, and who, after the service was begun, had slunk as quietly as possible into the free seats? As I afterwards learned, they were two of the former hearers, who were afraid that they might then have heard a sermon prepared for the occasion, and who wished to see and hear me in the *négligé* of my ordinary duty. They had not escaped the prying eye of our landlord, and they must have been observed by others too. Henceforth in the mind of the bulk of the people my departure was certain, the time alone was indeterminate.

In fact the general expectation was justified by the event. It was not however this time a respectable schoolmaster, who after the due number of bows handed me the call *in folio;* it was our old postman, whose countenance had never yet indicated the tidings he bore. I was sitting again in my summer-house; and my Cornelia lost all thought of the serpentine-walk in her anxiety to

put into my hands with all speed the broad, folded packet, saying, "Quick, quick! it's surely a call, William."

"And are you so very desirous of it?" said I, as I examined the seal and postmark, a thing that, as well as I can recollect, I have never omitted doing.

But now, how gentle soever my better half is on other occasions, I should have had the worst of it with her, if I had not made haste to break the seal. It really was a letter of call *in formâ*, with the accompanying missive, and special pressing letters, the whole—for twelve stivers postage!

But now, Altorf, in serious reality, what a strange being is man! Just like one in a fever we always mentally should lie better on the other side. How calm and peaceful glide on the days of a village-pastor! I still cannot think of it without tears. And yet I am firmly convinced there is not one of us who can always suppress the wish to be called at least once, even though his reason should assure him that he might thereby forfeit his real happiness, but hardly could gain it. As for myself I will not conceal it from *you*, this wish lay slumbering from the very beginning at the bottom of my heart. It was not discontent: no, I felt that I was happy, and I saw many chances to one that my happiness would suffer by a change. But it was that innate restlessness which whips us all on from childhood to the grave; it was, with that, a remnant of repressed ambition which was constantly whispering me, "Why should you alone remain on the lowest step, when such a one and such a one are mounting higher and higher?" Perhaps there was also the legitimate desire of extending the sphere of my

teaching and my Christian allocutions to more enlightened auditors, and in the latter period some pecuniary difficulties. Be it as it may, I wished more than I liked to wish, and—my wish was fulfilled.

And then—yes, I was then punished for my presumptuous wish. Oh, I never saw so vividly with what fatherly, I had nearly written *motherly*, love, Providence chooses for his children. We must submit to our *lot*, but *choice* brings anxiety, hesitation, responsibility. I never wish for—so far as I can answer for my wishes—the return of the fortnight of deliberation after my first call. As long as I weighed the arguments for and against, I thought I should be able to decide; but I was just like the children with St. Nicholas; when I had the one in my hand I grieved for the loss of the other, and always that which I had *not* chosen was what most pleased me. My knowledge of things was not become greater and my mind was duller, and after a super-wise deliberation I was all the more afraid that I had now done something eminently foolish. Luckily, after ten uneasy days and sleepless nights, more accurate accounts arrived which made my refusal a matter of conscience. I remained, and—I did not regret it.

The second time the choice was less difficult, though the time of deliberation was little less disagreeable. However much my attachment to Mastland had increased during the last year, I could not flatter myself that I should not probably repent a second refusal. Even in his wishes and cares, every one passes through certain periods, and he thinks at a later, what at an earlier one he never supposed he would have thought. I was still

warmly attached to my people and to a country-life. I felt it now even more than ever. But I set before me, more than I had done, the disadvantages of remaining always in the country and in a first place. I feared that the elasticity of my mind would give way, without change and extent of occupation, and that I might perhaps become like many whom I had hitherto judged too hardly. But above all, I could not hesitate when I looked at my family. Could I always endure the daily annoyances of a straitened income? Could I supply my children with what Master Balyon could not give them? Could I afterwards accomplish the task of settling them in the world? These and other difficulties, which had never lain heavy on me while they were unavoidable, now presented themselves vividly to my mind, and I decided, though more from conviction than from inclination.

I had this advantage that no one was disappointed by my decision: they would have wondered rather than rejoiced if I had decided otherwise. From a village to a town! No, no, never could the good Mastlanders have been persuaded that merely out of regard for them I could have rejected this accession of dignity, this superiority of residence, and they would have viewed the matter so long on every side that they would at last have hit on some reason or other which had never entered my imagination.

At the customary procession of the authorities to the manse, it was quite visible that it was only done *pro formâ*. The Kirk-session spoke by the mouth of an Elder, who had for years been studying the Library, of a *wider sphere of action which called me*; the Burgo-

master, who on such an occasion laid some claim to the gift of eloquence, hummed some bombast about a position of greater refinement and larger income; Balyon declaimed on the rudeness and simplicity of a rural congregation; and Du Meaux spoke of the pleasures of select conversation. And although they expressed their sincere sorrow at losing me, they added,—the Elder, that since it could not be otherwise, he wished me a more abundant harvest in the vineyard of the Lord,—the Burgomaster, that he did not grudge me my preferment,—Balyon, that as a friend he gladly saw the crown of honour glittering on my brows,—and Du Meaux, that it gratified him to see my merits duly estimated. Duifhuis alone departed from the general theme, and took advantage of this opportunity of telling the towns the truth once more. He concluded however, shrugging his shoulders, with, "What shall I say? I have never had any children, and one is certainly better without them. Mastland too is rather poor. I have to be sure done my best and the people are not unwilling, but they could never bid against a town. Otherwise you would do better to stay if you could; for I say it again, the great people in a town—bah! a parcel of knaves, nothing else."

In short the affair was decided. But henceforth, O my good friend Altorf, what a state of disquietude! If I could have done it I would perhaps have drawn back. First the hunt of the probationers. Heavens what a tempest! Three on the very same post-day with the call, six the next day, and so on. What a number of old college-friends who still thought of me with affection! What laudatory testimonials from professors, ministers, far-off

cousins of both sexes, who all esteemed me so highly and rejoiced so sincerely in my advancement! And outside the manse, every flax-office patronizes a probationer, every winter-customer sends a recommendation with his crock of butter, and they are packed up in the bags in the shops for the people who come to market; nay, porters and mule-drivers hawk them about. As far as my influence goes on the promise of appointment on the part of the lord of the manor and the Kirk-session the pleasure of giving it is amply counterbalanced by the torment of refusing it; the former rarely makes friends, the latter nearly always enemies; as every one agrees with me, that in the interest of the congregation few should preach, but his own favourite must of course be included. All sorts of underhand dealings are ascribed to me in favour of my friends, *whose light I do not wish to see shut out;* the Session itself grows more and more suspicious; so I concluded, in order to part in peace, with putting off till after my departure everything relating to the call of my successor.

Other cares and troubles now. For example, to hire a house in town, and then to go over it with my Kee from garret to cellar; there must be some difference between the furniture and the inhabitants of a manse and of a house in town: the *merely necessary alone* had been set down, that is significant; but one *cannot live so* there, and the children *could not run about that way in the town* . . . Woe is me! what have I entered on?

At last the boat from X— lay in the harbour of Mastland. Altorf, we shall no doubt some time or other all of us remove, and that will be accomplished very simply;

but so long as we men abide here on earth what inconveniences have we not! I never saw that so clearly as now, when everything must be taken out of its place that is not fastened with nails or holdfasts. What had come in at the door from time to time must now go out all at once. What a number of little conveniences we are used to which we hardly enjoy, as we take no notice of them, but which we miss terribly when they are absent! Our life for the last days was utterly unsociable,—there was no longer anything domestic in the house; even Bram pouted for his drum and Mina for her Merry-Andrew, and I could not blame them for it, for we grown people missed our drums and Merry-Andrews.

At length the long-expected, long-dreaded 17th of September came. Certainly occupation and care are the best conductors of violent feeling and deep afflictive pain. Had we been obliged to wait in idleness for that day of departure, it would have found us exhausted and sunk in tears, sick in body and in mind. Now we advanced to meet it like a whirlwind through a cloud of dust. Cornelia was kept awake on her last mattress by her anxiety not to pack up or ship the necessary, and then the most necessary articles, and to be able to receive her last guest among the last remnants of our household-stuff; and I, I anxiously sought for pen and paper and ideas in my empty study.

I will say nothing, Altorf, of my farewell-sermon. If you like you can read it, or rather see the dry skeleton of it, for the life and soul remained at Mastland. I had maturely weighed and pondered my words; for I deem it of the utmost consequence to speak accurately,

especially on solemn and affecting occasions. Nevertheless when I looked for the last time at *my* congregation, still mine to-day, I found those words so cold, I had so much more to say, that I burst the bonds of study and gave way to my feelings. I beheld friends, friends through faith and piety, who were expecting a farewell.; old men whose bald heads and bent backs I probably saw for the last time; scholars on whom I should once more deeply impress my lessons, and these again erring, ignorant, sorsowful.—I was going thence and leaving so much to be done . . . God be praised! Another labourer, perhaps more capable than I, will enter on my labours.

At home I found a various assemblage. Some strangers, of those people who are always on the look-out for something to fill up the void in their head and heart, who go to a funeral *to pass away the time,* and seek for *amusement* at an affecting leave-taking. I did certainly regard them with an eye which said, "What brings you here?" But there were also warm friends; the worthy Rusters, who had even, though with difficulty, let the outline of my sermon alone; and Falk, who on this occasion abstained from the *exegesis* of the text; and so many more: shall I find such elsewhere?

On Monday morning I was up with the dawn. I must once more in silence and solitude go round my former territory. Not a spot in the house did I leave unvisited and unviewed. There hovered round me everywhere joyful—sometimes also mournful—recollections. All those little domestic events, so insignificant to the stranger, so important to us, appeared as if portrayed on the walls. Melancholy enjoyment of memory! how can so many

escape it, at least with a clear conscience? In the garden too I roamed once more over all the walks. The dahlias hung their heads mournfully; the weeping-willow stretched towards me his slender branches wet with the morning-dew; the roses would bloom no longer for me; I had gathered the last crop from the fruit-trees. I must sit for a moment once more in my summer-house. Where shall I in my town-residence find such a view as that of the fresh green pastures and the quietly grazing oxen, a view so calculated for stilling the rising storm of the passions? But I must get up; my hours were numbered, and I had yet a sacred pilgrimage to perform, before the morning should, as in a whirlpool, give me some turns round and round and then carry me away.

I now stood, where I wished more especially to spend a tranquil moment, in the churchyard. I let my eye run over the green sods. How many of my people did they cover, borne to the grave in these five years! old men and delicate children, but also stout lads, men and women. How often had I joined in this procession and seen those coffins lowered into the earth, which took with them so much treasure out of the houses! How often had I spoken a simple and earnest word at the grave, amid sorrowing relations standing over it! Behold that grave on which no grass has yet taken root in the rough earth,—that is the last, which from my study-window I have seen or shall see dug. No tombstone will be laid over it; else would I inscribe on it merely HERE LIES A CHRISTIAN. It is my excellent friend, William Klaver. He has left Mastland before me, and he took leave of me with these words: "Good-bye till we meet again! the

Lord calls me." "Yes, good-bye till we meet again, my pious friend! and you too, my worthy old Doctor! and all of you who sleep in the Lord!—And now farewell, ye beloved dead! From your dust also I am separated. We shall not rest together; but wherever my resting-place shall be, the same Lord watches over our graves, and will reanimate our dust at the last day."

While I was thus soliloquizing the sun rose from a sea of morning-mist, and shot his beams into my empty chambers. Cornelia was already making signs to me out of one of the windows; Mina was nodding with her blond head, and Bram was laughing and pointing at me and the graves. I returned into the house, and from that moment was in a bustle till the hour of my departure. Our remaining goods were quickly put up, and the Burgomaster, who would in person see me part of the way, abridged for that purpose the hour of his breakfast. More and more groups of neighbours and friends formed along the street of the village, and once more myself and my wife and my little boy walked up and down the street. Mrs. Wijsland stretched over the hatch and thrust a package of cakes into Bram's hand; Widow Kortebrand sobbing hid her face in her apron; Perkers himself said in a gentler tone than usual, "He was not bad after all." "Aye, not bad, to be sure, *civilly*," replied Teunis Raapland: "may the Lord now set a *spiritually* good shepherd over his poor flock!" A little further on stood Paul Kors and Job Wijsland. The latter could not utter a word, I saw a tear, the first during five years, in the eye of the former. And the worthy Balyon, he never observed that the school-children were

trampling and crowding on each other to get close to the carriage, and that they were tearing the morning-gown of the fussy Duifhuis, who was talking to every one, and therefore shed no tears . . . It is too much for me, I must get up and be off. My head sank for a moment between my hands, I then raised it again, while the horses clattered and the axletrees cracked; I called out my last good-bye to all, and drove away. At a distance I still heard the sportive cry of the schoolboys, who alone, some of the bigger ones excepted, had not shared in the general perturbation. "Behold," said I, "the generation who will forget *you* and hereafter weep for another; that generation will no doubt carry the memory of you with them to the grave; for the following one the painter puts your name on the board in the church."

And now, my dearest Altorf, I am at my baiting-place, for Uncle John insisted on my spending a few days with him while my goods were removing. I am wearied, and yet I cannot rest here, and still the people are kind. Uncle in his joy goes up more stairs in a day than at other times in a whole month. Aunt stuffs groceries into every corner and vacancy in box and hamper. Cousin William writes out accurate lists of our goods, and Cousin Jenny gets pap for my little one, whereby she has continually to wipe her fingers and apron. But still I do not feel at home here; neither shall I in yonder place. However carefully you may transplant a tree, some of the finer vessels will be broken, and it suffers from a thousand unnoticed wounds. And should it not be still more the case with a human being? Shall I meet with a good

soil in which my inclinations can take root, in which my zeal can bear fruit? Shall I remain in that garden till, as a withered trunk, I am rooted up out of it? God only knows!

Your Friend,

WILLIAM.

THE END.

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